

AL-GHAZĀLĪ

*Kitāb asrār al-zakāt wa
Kitāb asrār al-ṣiyām*

THE MYSTERIES OF
CHARITY AND THE
MYSTERIES OF FASTING

BOOKS 5 and 6 of the *Ihyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*

THE REVIVAL OF THE
RELIGIOUS SCIENCES

TRANSLATED *from the* ARABIC
with an INTRODUCTION *and* NOTES
by M. ABDURRAHMAN FITZGERALD

On the Revival of the Religious Sciences
(*Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*)

“The *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* is the most valuable and
most beautiful of books.”

—Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282)

“The *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* is one of al-Ghazālī's best works.”

—Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm (d. 728/1328)

“Any seeker of [felicity of] the hereafter cannot do without the
Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn”

—Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370)

“The *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* is a marvelous book containing a wide
variety of Islamic sciences intermixed with many subtle accounts
of Sufism and matters of the heart.”

—Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373)

“The *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* is one of best and greatest books on
admonition, it was said concerning it, ‘if all the books of Islam
were lost except for the *Iḥyā'* it would suffice what was lost.”

—Ḥājjī Khalifa Kātib Čelebī (d. 1067/1657)

“The *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* is one of [Imām al-Ghazālī's] most noble
works, his most famous work, and by far his greatest work”

—Muḥammad Murtadā l-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791)

On Imām al-Ghazālī

“Al-Ghazālī is [like] a deep ocean [of knowledge].”

—Imām al-Haramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085)

“Al-Ghazālī is the second [Imām] Shāfi‘ī.”

—Muḥammad b. Yahyā l-Janzī (d. 549/1154)

“Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, the Proof of Islam (Ḥujjat al-Islām) and the Muslims, the Imām of the imāms of religion, [is a man] whose like eyes have not seen in eloquence and elucidation, and speech and thought, and acumen and natural ability.”

—Abd al-Ghāfir b. Ismā‘īl al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134)

“[He was] the Proof of Islam and Muslims, Imām of the imāms of religious sciences, one of vast knowledge, the wonder of the ages, the author of many works, and [a man] of extreme intelligence and the best of the sincere.”

—Imām al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347)

“Al-Ghazālī is without doubt the most remarkable figure in all Islam.”

—T.J. DeBoer

“... A man who stands on a level with Augustine and Luther in religious insight and intellectual vigor.”

—H.A.R. Gibb

“I have to some extent found, and I believe others can find, in the words and example of al-Ghazālī a true *iḥyā’* . . .”

—Richard J. McCarthy, S.J.

The Forty Books of the Revival of the Religious Sciences (*Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*)

The Quarter of Worship

- 1 The Book of Knowledge
- 2 The Principles of the Creed
- 3 The Mysteries of Purification
- 4 The Mysteries of the Prayer
- 5 The Mysteries of Charity
- 6 The Mysteries of Fasting
- 7 The Mysteries of the Pilgrimage
- 8 The Etiquette of the Recitation of the Qur'ān
- 9 Invocations and Supplications
- 10 The Arrangement of the Litanies and the Exposition of the Night Vigil

The Quarter of Customs

- 11 The Proprieties of Eating
- 12 The Proprieties of Marriage
- 13 The Proprieties of Acquisition and Earning a Living
- 14 The Lawful and the Unlawful
- 15 The Proprieties of Friendship and Brotherhood
- 16 The Proprieties of Retreat
- 17 The Proprieties of Travel
- 18 The Proprieties of the Audition and Ecstasy
- 19 The Commanding of Right and the Forbidding of Wrong
- 20 The Proprieties of Living and the Prophetic Mannerisms

The Quarter of Perils

- 21 The Exposition of the Wonders of the Heart
- 22 Training the Soul, Refining the Character, and Treating the Ailments of the Heart
- 23 Overcoming the Two Desires
- 24 The Bane of the Tongue
- 25 The Censure of Anger, Malice, and Envy
- 26 The Censure of This World
- 27 The Censure of Greed and the Love of Wealth
- 28 The Censure of Fame and Hypocritical Ostentation
- 29 The Censure of Pride and Vanity
- 30 The Censure of Deceit

The Quarter of Deliverance

- 31 On Repentance
- 32 On Patience and Thankfulness
- 33 On Fear and Hope
- 34 On Poverty and Abstinence
- 35 On Unity and Trust
- 36 On Love, Longing, Intimacy, and Contentment
- 37 On Intention, Sincerity, and Truthfulness
- 38 On Vigilance and Accounting
- 39 On Contemplation
- 40 On the Remembrance of Death and the Hereafter

The Mysteries of Charity and Its Important Elements and
The Mysteries of Fasting and Its Important Elements

Kitāb asrār al-zakāt wa-muhimmātihā wa
Kitāb asrār al-ṣiyām wa-muhimmātihā

Books 5 and 6 of the

Revival of the Religious Sciences

Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Editor's Note

THIS is the complete translation of *Kitāb asrār al-zakāt* and *Kitāb asrār al-ṣiyām*, the *Mysteries of Charity* and the *Mysteries of Fasting*, books 5 and 6 of the *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* of Ḥujjat al-Islām, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. These were translated from the Arabic text published by Dār al-Minhāj of Jedda (2011), which utilized additional manuscripts and early printed editions.

Arabic terms and names follow the transliteration system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Common era (CE) dates have been added. The blessings on prophets and others, as used by Imām al-Ghazālī, are represented in the original Arabic, as listed below.

Arabic	English	Usage
عَزَّوَجَلَّ	Mighty and majestic is He	On mention of God
سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى	Exalted and most high is He	Used together or separately
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ	Blessings and peace of God be upon him	On mention of the Prophet Muḥammad
عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ	Peace be upon him	On mention of one
عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ	Peace be upon them	or more prophets
رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ	God be pleased with him	On mention of one or more
رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ	God be pleased with them	Companions of the Prophet
رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا	God be pleased with her	On mention of a female Companion of the Prophet
رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ	God have mercy on him	On mention of someone who is deceased

The translator has included some of the footnotes and references in the Dār al-Minhāj edition. These footnotes include comments from Murtaḍā l-Zabīdī's *Ithāf* (a detailed commentary on the *Ihyā'*

‘ulūm al-dīn) and identify many of Imām al-Ghazālī’s sources. The translator provided explanatory footnotes where necessary; clarification in the text appears in hard brackets.

In addition, the editors have compiled a short biography of Imām al-Ghazālī with a chronology of important events in his life. This is followed by an extract from Imām al-Ghazālī’s introduction to the *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*; the editors hope this may serve as a guide to the *Revival of the Religious Sciences* for those reading Imām al-Ghazālī for the first time.



Biography of Imām al-Ghazālī

HE is Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ghazālī l-Ṭūsī; he was born in 450/1058 in the village of Ṭabarān near Ṭūs (in northeast Iran) and he died there, at the age of fifty-five, in 505/1111. Muḥammad’s father died when he and his younger brother Aḥmad were still young; their father left a little money for their education in the care of a Sufi friend of limited means. When the money ran out, their caretaker suggested that they enroll in a *madrasa*. The *madrasa* system meant they had a stipend, room, and board. Al-Ghazālī studied *fiqh* in his hometown under a Sufi named Aḥmad al-Rādhakānī; he then traveled to Jurjān and studied under Ismā‘īl b. Mas‘ada al-Ismā‘īlī (d. 477/1084).

On his journey home his caravan was overtaken by highway robbers who took all of their possessions. Al-Ghazālī went to the leader of the bandits and demanded his notebooks. The leader asked, what are these notebooks? Al-Ghazālī answered: “This is the knowledge that I traveled far to acquire,” the leader acquiesced to al-Ghazālī’s demands after stating: “If you claim that it is knowledge that you have, how can we take it away from you?” This incident left a lasting impression on the young scholar. Thereafter, he returned to Ṭūs for three years, where he committed to memory all that he had learned thus far.

In 469/1077 he traveled to Nīshāpūr to study with the leading scholar of his time, Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), at the Nizāmiyya College; al-Ghazālī remained his student for approximately eight years, until al-Juwaynī died. Al-Ghazālī was one of his most illustrious students, and al-Juwaynī referred to him as “a deep ocean [of knowledge].” As one of al-Juwaynī star pupils, al-Ghazālī used to fill in as a substitute lecturer in his teacher’s absence. He also tutored his fellow students in the subjects that

al-Juwaynī taught at the Nizāmiyya. Al-Ghazālī wrote his first book, on the founding principles of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), while studying with al-Juwaynī.

Very little is known about al-Ghazālī's family, though some biographers mention that he married while in Nishāpūr; others note that he had married in Tūs prior to leaving for Nishāpūr. Some accounts state that he had five children, a son who died early and four daughters. Accounts also indicate that his mother lived to see her son rise to fame and fortune.

After the death of al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī went to the camp (*al-mu'askar*) of the Saljūq wazīr Nizām al-Mulk (d. 485/1192). He stayed at the camp, which was a gathering place for scholars, and quickly distinguished himself among their illustrious company. Nizām al-Mulk recognized al-Ghazālī's genius and appointed him professor at the famed Nizāmiyya College of Baghdad.

Al-Ghazālī left for Baghdad in 484/1091 and stayed there four years—it was a very exciting time to be in the heart of the Islamic empire. At the Nizāmiyya College he had many students, by some estimates as many as three hundred. In terms of his scholarly output, this was also a prolific period in which he wrote *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, *al-Mustazhirī*, and other works.

Al-Ghazālī was well-connected politically and socially; we have evidence that he settled disputes related to the legitimacy of the rule of the 'Abbāsid caliph, al-Mustazhir (r. 487–512/1094–1118) who assumed his role as the caliph when he was just fifteen years old, after the death of his father al-Muqtadī (d. 487/1094). Al-Ghazālī issued a *fatwā* of approval of the appointment of al-Mustazhir and was present at the oath-taking ceremony.

In Baghdad, al-Ghazālī underwent a spiritual crisis, during which he was overcome by fear of the punishment of the hellfire. He became convinced that he was destined for the hellfire if he did not change his ways; he feared that he had become too engrossed in worldly affairs, to the detriment of his spiritual being. He began to question his true intentions: was he writing and teaching to serve God, or because he enjoyed the fame and fortune that resulted from his lectures. He experienced much suffering, both inward and outward; one day as he stood before his students to present

a lecture, he found himself unable to speak. The physicians were unable to diagnose any physical malady. Al-Ghazālī remained in Baghdad for a time, then left his teaching post for the pilgrimage. He left behind fortune, fame, and influence. He was beloved by his numerous students and had many admirers, including the sultan; he was also envied by many. The presumption is that he left in the manner he did—ostensibly to undertake the pilgrimage—because if he had made public his intentions to leave permanently, those around him would have tried to convince him to remain and the temptation might have been too strong to resist.

After leaving Baghdad, he changed direction and headed toward Damascus; according to his autobiography he disappeared from the intellectual scene for ten years. This does not mean that he did not teach, but that he did not want to return to public life and be paid for teaching. This ten-year period can be divided into two phases. First, he spent two years in the East—in greater Syria and on the pilgrimage. We have evidence that while on his return to Tūs he appeared at a Sufi lodge opposite the Nizāmiyya College in Baghdad. He spent the second phase of the ten-year period (the remaining eight years) in Tūs, where he wrote the famed *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, a work that was inspired by the change in his outlook that resulted from his spiritual crisis.

When he arrived back in his hometown in 490/1097, he established a school and a Sufi lodge, in order to continue teaching and learning. In 499/1106, Nizām al-Mulk's son, Fakhr al-Mulk, requested that al-Ghazālī accept a teaching position at his old school, the Nizāmiyya of Nishāpūr. He accepted and taught for a time, but left this position in 500/1106 after Fakhr al-Mulk was assassinated by Ismā'īlīs. He then returned to Tūs and divided his time between teaching and worship. He died in 505/1111 and was buried in a cemetery near the citadel of Tābarān.

Legacy and Contributions of al-Ghazālī

Al-Ghazālī's two hundred and seventy-three works span many disciplines and can be grouped under the following headings:

1. Jurisprudence and legal theory. Al-Ghazālī made foundational contributions to Shāfi'ī jurisprudence; his book *al-Wajīz* is major handbook that has been used in teaching institutions around the world; many commentaries have been written on it, most notably by Abū l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Rāfi'ī (d. 623/1226). In legal theory, *al-Mustasfa min 'ilm al-uṣūl* is considered one of five foundational texts in the discipline.
2. Logic and philosophy. Al-Ghazālī introduced logic in Islamic terms that jurists could understand and utilize. His works on philosophy include the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, which has been studied far beyond the Muslim world and has been the subject of numerous commentaries, discussions, and refutations.
3. Theology, including works on heresiography in refutation of Bāṭinī doctrines. He also expounded on the theory of occasionalism.
4. Ethics and educational theory. The *Mizān al-amal* and other works such as the *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* mention a great deal on education.
5. Spirituality and Sufism. His magnum opus, the *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* is a pioneering work in the field of spirituality, in terms of its organization and its comprehensive scope.
6. Various fields. Al-Ghazālī also wrote shorter works in a variety of disciplines, including his autobiography (*al-Munqidh min al-dalāl*), works on Qur'ānic studies (*Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*), and political statecraft (*Naṣīhat al-mūluk*).

Chronology of al-Ghazālī's Life

450/1058	Birth of al-Ghazālī at Tūs
c. 461/1069	Began studies at Tūs
c. 465/1073	Traveled to Jurjān to study
466–469/1074–1077	Studied at Tūs
469/1077	Studied with al-Jūwaynī at the Nizāmiyya college in Nishāpūr
473/1080	al-Ghazālī composed his first book, <i>al-Mankhūl fī l-uṣūl</i>
477/1084	Death of al-Fāramdhī, one of al-Ghazālī's teachers
25 Rabī' II 478/ 20 August 1085	Death of al-Jūwaynī; al-Ghazālī left Nishāpūr
Jumāda I 484/ July 1091	Appointed to teach at the Nizāmiyya college in Baghdad
10 Ramaḍān 485/ 14 October 1092	Nizām-al-Mulk was assassinated
484–487/1091–1094	Studied philosophy
Muharrām 487/ February 1094	Attended the oath-taking of the new caliph, al-Mustazhir
487/1094	Finished <i>Maqāsid al-falāsifa</i>
5 Muharrām 488/ 21 January 1095	Finished <i>Tahāfut al-falāsifa</i>
Rajab 488/ July 1095	Experienced a spiritual crisis
Dhū l-Qa'ḍa 488/ November 1095	Left Baghdad for Damascus
Dhū l-Qa'ḍa 489/ November – December 1096	Made pilgrimage and worked on the <i>Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn</i>
Jumāda II 490/ May 1097	Taught from the <i>Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn</i> during a brief stop in Baghdad
Rajab 490/June 1097	Seen in Baghdad by Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī
Fall 490/1097	Returned to Tūs

Dhū l-Hijja 490/ November 1097	Established a <i>madrasa</i> and a <i>khānqāh</i> in Tūs
Dhū l-Qaʿda 499/ July 1106	Taught at the Nizāmiyya college in Nishāpūr
500/1106	Wrote <i>al-Munqidh min al-dalāl</i>
500/1106	Returned to Tūs
28 Dhū l-Hijja 502/ 5 August 1109	Finished <i>al-Mustasfā min ʿilm al-uṣūl</i>
Jumada I 505/ December 1111	Finished <i>Iljām al-ʿawām ʿan ʿilm al-kalām</i>
14 Jumada II 505/ 18 December 1111	Imām al-Ghazālī died in Tūs

Eulogies in Verse

Because of him the lame walked briskly,
And the songless through him burst into melody.

On the death of Imām al-Ghazālī, Abū l-Muẓaffar Muḥammad al-Abiwardī said of his loss:

He is gone! and the greatest loss which ever afflicted me,
was that of a man who left no one like him among mankind.



About the Revival of the Religious Sciences

THE present work of books 5 and 6 of Imām al-Ghazālī's forty-volume masterpiece includes an excerpt from al-Ghazālī's introduction that explains the arrangement and purpose of the *Ihyāʾ ulūm al-dīn*.

People have composed books concerning some of these ideas, but this book [the *Ihyāʾ*] differs from them in five ways, by

1. clarifying what they have obscured and elucidating what they have treated casually;
2. arranging what they scattered and putting in order what they separated;
3. abbreviating what they made lengthy and proving what they reported;
4. omitting what they have repeated; and
5. establishing the truth of certain obscure matters that are difficult to understand and which have not been presented in books at all.

For although all the scholars follow one course, there is no reason one should not proceed independently and bring to light something unknown, paying special attention to something his colleagues have forgotten. Or they are not heedless about calling attention to it, but they neglect to mention it in books. Or they do not overlook it, but something prevents them from exposing it [and making it clear].

So these are the special properties of this book, besides its inclusion of all these various kinds of knowledge.

Two things induced me to arrange this book in four parts. The first and fundamental motive is that this arrangement in establishing what is true and in making it understandable is, as it were, inevitable because the branch of knowledge by which one approaches the

hereafter is divided into the knowledge of [proper] conduct and the knowledge of [spiritual] unveiling.

By the knowledge of [spiritual] unveiling I mean knowledge and only knowledge. By the science of [proper] conduct I mean knowledge as well as action in accordance with that knowledge. This work will deal only with the science of [proper] conduct, and not with [spiritual] unveiling, which one is not permitted to record in writing, although it is the ultimate aim of saints and the ultimate aim of the sincere. The science of [proper] conduct is merely a path that leads to unveiling and only through that path did the prophets of God communicate with the people and lead them to Him. Concerning [spiritual] unveiling, the prophets عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام spoke only figuratively and briefly through signs and symbols, because they realized the inability of people's minds to comprehend. Therefore since the scholars are heirs of the prophets, they cannot but follow in their footsteps and emulate their way.

The knowledge of [proper] conduct is divided into (1) outward knowledge, by which I mean knowledge of the senses and (2) inward knowledge, by which I mean knowledge of the functions of the heart.

The physical members either perform acts of prescribed worship, or acts that are in accordance with custom, while the heart, because it is removed from the senses and belongs to the world of dominion, is subject to either praiseworthy or blameworthy [influences]. Therefore it is necessary to divide this branch of knowledge into two parts: outward and inward. The outward part, which is connected to the senses, is subdivided into acts of worship and acts that pertain to custom. The inward part, which is connected to the states of the heart and the characteristics of the soul, is subdivided into blameworthy states and praiseworthy states. So the total makes four divisions of the sciences of the practice of religion.

The second motive [for this division] is that I have noticed the sincere interest of students in jurisprudence, which has become popular among those who do not fear God تَعَالَى but who seek to boast and exploit its influence and prestige in arguments. It [jurisprudence] is also divided into four quarters, and he who follows the style of one who is beloved becomes beloved.

The Mysteries of Charity and Its Important Elements

Kitāb asrār al-zakāt wa-muhimmātihā

Book 5 of the

Revival of the Religious Sciences

Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ

He has certainly succeeded who has purified himself and mentions the name of his Lord and prays.

Sūrat al-ʿAlā, 87:14–15

Translator's Introduction

THIS verse is one of the earliest references in the Qurʾān to the verb *zakā* (purify), from which we derive the noun *zakāt* (charity), the subject of book 5 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Ihyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*). The verb expresses a range of meanings, including purification, growth, and giving in charity. The traditional explanation of how these are connected is often described with the image of weeding a garden to enable the most beautiful and useful plants to thrive. Thus, giving in charity is a process of “weeding” the soul of greed and purifying one’s wealth of what rightfully belongs to the poor, to allow virtue to flourish. Here too is a reminder of the notion of *fiṭrā*, the primordial perfection

with which, according to a *ḥadīth*, every baby is born. Generosity does not need to be planted in the soul; it is already there, but the strangling weeds of greed must be removed, ideally by their roots.

Throughout the Qurʾān, *zakāt* is often mentioned with *ṣalāt* (prayer) as in these verses:

So recite what is easy from it [the Qurʾān], and establish prayer, and give zakāt, and loan God a goodly loan... (73:20).

This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of God—who believe in the unseen, establish the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them (2:2–3).

In fact, charity is mentioned almost as frequently as the prayer. In scores of verses the two are joined in variations on the phrase, *perform the prayer and give zakāt* (*wa-aqīmū l-ṣalāt wa-ātū l-zakāt*). This establishes a legal association between these two kinds of devotion, as well as a phonetic link, as the two words rhyme.¹ When referred to together, this marriage of the two implies that just as the prayer (*ṣalāt*) is a time to give thanks to God for our lives, charity (*zakāt*) is a way of giving thanks for the abundance God has given us; we do this by giving a portion of our wealth to our fellow human beings.

When we give in charity what we already have flourishes, and the act of giving itself carries within it curative and healing properties. The prolific Hanbalī scholar, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya cites the following *ḥadīth*, "...on the authority of Anas b. Mālīk, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Charity truly extinguishes the wrath of the Lord and wards off affliction."² In this book, al-Ghazālī holds up the mystery of this virtue and practice such that, like a crystal slowly turning, we can see its many facets. He describes these meticulously, according to the Shāfiʿī school of *fiqh*, then invites us to glimpse its gem-like structure.

¹ The verse quoted at the beginning of this introduction (87:14–15) is a particularly wonderful example of the "musical" aspect of this combination: *Qad aflaha man tazakkā wa-dhakara isma rabbihi fa-sallā*.

² Ibn Hibbān, *Sahīh*, and al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan* on the authority of Abū Hurayra رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.

Acknowledgments

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In the Name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate

[Author's Introduction]

PRAISE be to God who gives both happiness and grief, life and death, laughter and tears, being and non-existence, poverty and wealth, satisfaction and deprivation; who made all living creatures from a drop of seed emitted, distinguished Himself from creation by His attribute of independence, and then chose some of His servants for the beauty [of this life] and poured down upon them from His bounty what would bring ease and wealth to whomever He willed, while others He made to be in need, to fall short in their provision and become weary in gaining it—this [was done] as a test and trial for them all. Then He made *zakāt* one of the pillars of *dīn*, and made it clear that by His grace, He gives success to those of His servants who purify themselves, and [He] purifies the possessions of those who give *zakāt* from the wealth that is His.¹

And may the blessings of God be upon Muhammad, the elect, the lord of creatures and sun of guidance, and on his family and Companions who were chosen for knowledge and piety—blessings and salutations of peace in abundance.

¹ The commentary points out that the portion of a person's wealth that is due to be paid as *zakāt* is not actually the possession of that person but rather God's wealth given as a trust. "And thus, he who pays *zakāt*, is paying it with God's wealth." Al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, 4:6.

To proceed: God most high made *zakāt* one of the pillars of Islam and joined its mention to that of the prayer, the highest of the duties [of Islam], saying, *And establish prayer and give zakāt.*²

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Islam is built on five things: to bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, to maintain the prayer, to give *zakāt*, [to fast in the month of Ramaḍān, and to perform the pilgrimage if you are able]...."³

And God gave a strict warning to those who are deficient in fulfilling this duty; and He said, *And those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God—give them tidings of a painful punishment* [9:34].

Spending in the way of God means setting aside from one's wealth what is due in *zakāt*. Ahnaf b. Qays said,

I was with a group of Quraysh when Abū Dharr passed by and said, "Give tidings to those who hoard their wealth: they will be branded on their backs with a brand that comes out of their sides, and branded on the back of their necks with a brand that comes out of their foreheads."⁴

Another version states that [the brand] will be placed on the nipples of one of them and come out of his shoulder blades, and be placed on the shoulder blades of another and come out his nipples.

And Abū Dharr said,

I came upon the Messenger of God ﷺ sitting in the shade of the Ka'ba, and when he saw me, he said, "By the Lord of the Ka'ba, they are the losers!" I asked, "Who are?" He answered, "All those who have wealth in abundance, except the ones who say, 'Here ... here ... here...' [as they give to those] in front of them, behind them, to their right, and to their left... And few are they, indeed. On the day of resurrection, the camels, cattle, or sheep of someone who did not pay *zakāt* on those

animals will return to him, [more] huge and [more] fat than they ever were, and they will ram him with their horns, and trample him under their hooves, and when the last of them is finished, the first will begin again—this until all human beings have been judged."⁵

Because these severe warnings are related in the two authentic collections,⁶ it is extremely important to the *dīn* that the mysteries of *zakāt*—its evident and hidden conditions, and its outward and inward meanings—be made clear, even though this present exposition is limited to what is indispensable for the one who gives *zakāt* or receives [*zakāt*] to know.

This is explained in four chapters:

The first [concerns] the different kinds of *zakāt* and the conditions under which they become obligatory.

The second [concerns] the manners related to *zakāt* and its inward and outward conditions.

The third [concerns] the recipient of *zakāt*, the conditions under which he qualifies for it, and the manners related to receiving it.

The fourth [concerns voluntary] charity⁷ (*ṣadaqa*) and its virtues.



² As in 2:43, 83, 110, 277, etc. According to the commentary, mention of the prayer in connection to the giving of *zakāt* occurs eighty-two times in the Qur'ān. Al-Zabidī, *al-Muḥṣan*, 4:7.

³ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 16.

⁴ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 992.

⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1465, 6638; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 990.

⁶ In al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (known as *al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the 'two *Ṣaḥīḥs*').

⁷ Throughout the text, where al-Ghazālī used the term *zakāt*, we have left it untranslated; on other occasions, where al-Ghazālī used the word *ṣadaqa*, but in the sense of *zakāt* (as the required "tax" on wealth), we have translated this as "charity." Whenever al-Ghazālī used *sadaqa* in its truest sense (i.e., as charitable giving in addition to *zakāt*), we have translated this as [voluntary] charity.

On the Different Kinds of *Zakāt* and the Conditions Under Which It Becomes Obligatory

ZAKĀT is divided into six types, according to the kind of wealth on which it is due. There is *zakāt* on livestock, currency, merchandise, buried treasure and mines, [edible] crops, and the *zakāt* due at the end of Ramadān.

1. *Zakāt* on Livestock

This, as well as other kinds of *zakāt*, is only obligatory on one who is free and Muslim. It is not a condition, however, that they be adult or of sound mind: *zakāt* is obligatory even on the wealth of children and the mentally ill. Such is the condition concerning who must pay it.

There are five conditions concerning the [animals] on which it must be paid. They must be livestock, they must live by grazing, they must be in the possession of the owner for an entire year, there must be a certain minimum number of them, and [they must] be entirely owned [by the person who is to pay].

[1]

The first condition is that [the animals] must be livestock.

In other words, *zakāt* is not due on any animals except camels, cattle, and flocks [of sheep or goats]. Horses, mules, donkeys, or the offspring from the mating of a sheep and gazelle, for example, are all exempt from *zakāt*.

[2]

The second condition is that they must live by grazing.

Hence, there is no *zakāt* on livestock raised on feed, or even on livestock that graze part of the time and are given feed [during] the other part. There is no *zakāt* due on them because food is purchased for them.

[3]

The third condition is that they must have been owned for one complete year.

As the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "There is no *zakāt* on wealth until a year passes on it."¹ The exception to this is the yield of crops grown on a piece of land. This becomes subject to *zakāt* before a year has passed because its source, [the land on which it grew], was possessed for a year. Whenever the possession is sold in the course of the year, repaid as something that was owed, or given away, then the year is interrupted [and *zakāt* is due].

¹ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1374; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1792.

[4]

The fourth condition [states that the person liable must have] complete ownership and control of the property.

Thus, *zakāt* is due on mortgaged livestock because the owner still has control over them, but not on livestock that are lost, seized, or stolen, unless they are found or returned to the owner, at which time the *zakāt* for the time that passed becomes due. And someone whose debt outweighs the value of his wealth is not liable for *zakāt*. To be considered wealthy, he must have wealth in excess of what is needed [for survival].

[5]

The fifth condition is that the quantity [of livestock] must reach a certain minimum.

On camels, there is no *zakāt* due until they are five in number, in which case the *zakāt* is one sheep in its second year or one goat in its third year. If the number of camels reaches ten, then two sheep are given, for fifteen, three [sheep are given], and for twenty, four [sheep are given].

If the number of camels reaches twenty-five, then a female camel in her second year (*bint makhād*) is paid as *zakāt*, but if this kind of camel is not part of the owner's livestock, then a male camel in his third year (*ibn labūn*) may be paid instead, even if the owner is able to buy [the first kind].

If the number reaches thirty-six, then a female camel in her third year (*ibnata labūn*) is due; on forty-six, a female camel in her fourth year (*hiqqa*) [is due]; on sixty-one camels, a female camel in her fifth year (*jadha'a*) [is due]; on seventy-six, two female camels in their third year [are due]; on ninety-one, two female camels in their fourth year [are due].

If the number of camels reaches one hundred twenty-one, [the *zakāt* is] three female camels in their third year, and if it reaches one hundred thirty-one camels, the calculation becomes fixed at a

female camel in her fourth year for every fifty, and a female camel in her third year for every forty.

For cattle, there is no *zakāt* until there are thirty [of them]. If there are thirty [cattle in] the herd, then the *zakāt* is a male calf in his second year (*tabī'un*). For forty, [the *zakāt*] is a cow in her third year (*musinnatun*), and for sixty, [the *zakāt* is] two male calves in their second year. Beyond this, the calculation becomes fixed at one cow in her third year for every forty cattle and one male calf in his second year for every thirty.

In respect to herds of sheep or goats, there is no *zakāt* until their number reaches forty. If there are forty, then one ewe in her second year is due as *zakāt* or one female goat in her third year. Beyond this number, there is no additional *zakāt* until the herd reaches one hundred twenty-one, in which case the *zakāt* is two ewes. For two hundred one, the *zakāt* is three ewes, and for four hundred, four ewes. Beyond this, the calculation becomes fixed at one ewe for every one hundred in the flock.

Charity paid on property owned by two partners jointly is calculated the same way it is if there were a single owner in respect to the minimum number. So, for example, if two men owned forty sheep together, then [the *zakāt*] is [still] one ewe, and if three people owned one hundred twenty ewes, the [zakāt] payable is still one ewe for all of them.

[In respect to *zakāt*], joint ownership with a neighbor is the same as joint ownership with someone who is not a neighbor, on the condition that their flocks are sheltered at night in the same place, watered from the same watering place, milked together, grazed together, that their pasturage is shared, and that they inter-breed. Both owners must also be among those on whom *zakāt* is due. There is no ruling on a partnership between a Muslim and a *dhimmi*² or a ransomed slave.

If it becomes necessary to give a camel of a younger age [than what is mentioned], that is permissible as long as the camel given is not younger than a *bint makhād*, but in such a case, the age difference must be made up. For a camel that is one year younger than the

prescribed age, two ewes or twenty dirhams must be added, and for a camel that is two years younger, four ewes or forty dirhams.

It is also possible to give a camel older than the prescribed age, as long as it is not older than a five-year-old (*jadha'a*). [In this case] the owner is compensated the difference in price from the treasury (*bayt al-māl*).

A sick camel may not be paid in *zakāt* if there exists even one in the herd that is well. A purebred camel must be paid on a purebred herd and a mixed-breed camel on a mixed-breed herd. A sheep that has been fattened for slaughter may not be paid in *zakāt*, nor [can] a pregnant female [be paid], nor one that has just given birth, nor a male used for mating, nor the best of the herd or flock.

2. Zakāt on Crops

One-tenth is due on every cultivated food crop if its minimum quantity is eight hundred *mann* [roughly six hundred ten kilograms dried weight]. There is no *zakāt* on less than that, nor on perishable fruit, nor on cotton, but there is [zakāt] on edible grains and dried dates and raisins, and the stipulation is that the latter must equal eight hundred *mann* in a [dried state], not as fresh dates or grapes. Thus, [the portion to be paid in *zakāt*] is taken after they have dried.

In the case of jointly owned crops, the quantity of one partner completes the quantity of the other to reach the minimum, and in a partnership involving more than two—for example, a vineyard owned by several heirs—if the total amounts to eight hundred *mann*, then eighty *mann* [about 61 kilograms] of the dried crop is due as *zakāt* and the cost is shared equally among the owners.

This does not, however, apply to shared ownership between two neighbors.

In addition, the minimum quantity cannot be made up from a combination of wheat and barley, but can be from a combination of hard and soft barley [that is, two varieties of the same species].

² A non-Muslim living under Muslim protection.

[The *zakāt* mentioned] is due on crops irrigated by naturally flowing water or by canals.³

If, however, [the crops] are irrigated by hand, using vessels or pails, then the *zakāt* is half the normal amount [that is, one-fifth]. And if a person has crops watered in both ways, then the amount is based on whatever method is more common.

In respect to the kind of produce [that can be used] to pay *zakāt*, this includes dried dates, raisins, and dried, winnowed grain. Grapes or fresh dates cannot be used for payment unless some illness has struck the trees [or vines] and they need to be cut down before the fruit is entirely ripe. In such a case, fresh dates [or grapes] may be taken, of which nine measures go to the owner and one to the poor. In this case, our saying, "Division is [like] selling" does not apply, since the division is made out of necessity.

Zakāt [on date palms and vines] becomes due as soon as the [dates] appear ripe or the grapes have set, but actual payment is not made until they are dried [and cleaned].

3. *Zakāt* on Gold and Silver

If [someone possesses monetary wealth] for an entire year equivalent to two hundred Meccan dirhams of pure silver, then the *zakāt* due is five dirhams, which is one-fourth of one-tenth [that is, 2.5 percent]. [*Zakāt*] on anything above that—be it only one dirham—is reckoned in the same way.

The minimum amount of gold on which *zakāt* must be paid is twenty pure Meccan *mithqāl* [dinars], on which is paid one-quarter of one-tenth [that is, 2.5 percent], and anything beyond that is reckoned in the same way.

But if the amount is even one grain short of the minimum, then no *zakāt* is due on it.

If a person is in possession of counterfeit coinage, *zakāt* is payable if the amount of pure gold contained therein equals the requisite minimum.

Zakāt is due on unworked gold and silver and also on items that are forbidden for men to use, such as gold and silver vessels and gold riding gear. If these are made of a metal permissible for men, however, then there is no *zakāt* on them.

It is also due on [the principal of] a debt that one is able to repay at the moment of its repayment, and if repayment is postponed, then it is not due until [the agreed on] period of time has passed.

4. *Zakāt* on Merchandise

Zakāt on merchandise is [reckoned] like that on gold and silver, except that the year is reckoned from the time the gold or silver with which he purchased the merchandise first came into his possession, provided that this [initial] amount was equal to the legal minimum.

If the [initial] capital was less than the minimum or if goods were purchased with the intention of selling them for a profit, then the year is calculated from the time of purchase.

Zakāt must be paid in the currency of the land and [normally] value is determined in this currency. However, if the goods were bought with a particular currency that was equal to the legal minimum liable to *zakāt*, then it is preferable to use that currency rather than the local [currency].

If someone resolves to engage in trade using wealth that had been set aside, the year would not begin based on that intention alone. Rather, it [begins when] he actually purchases goods to sell. Indeed, if he were to change his intention [concerning how he would use the designated capital] before the year was up, the obligation to pay *zakāt* would be removed, although it is preferable to pay *zakāt* on the money set aside.

Zakāt due on any profit from the sale of goods at the end of the year is reckoned from when the capital used came into a person's possession. In this case, there is no exception that [another] year must pass on it, as is the case with livestock.

For money-changers, the *zakāt* year is not interrupted by the continual flow of currency from one form to another, as is the case in other forms of trade. And for someone who lends money [for

³ This includes rain, rivers, streams, and irrigation canals that are created naturally.

a commercial venture], *zakāt* is due on profits he himself makes [from that venture] even before the division of shares takes place. This is the most standard practice.

5. *Zakāt* on Buried Treasure (*Rikāz*) and Mines

Rikāz means wealth that was buried during the pre-Islamic era (*jāhiliyya*), then found in a land on which no one has laid claim during the Islamic era.

The finder of such wealth—be it gold or silver—is required to pay one-fifth of it in *zakāt* without reckoning a year [of its being in the finder's possession]. The prevailing opinion also excludes the requirement of its being of a certain minimum value (*niṣāb*), because stipulating one-fifth of it [in *zakāt*] signifies that it is [considered] like booty. However, [another opinion] requires that it be of some minimum value, and this [opinion] is also admissible, since the way [in which this charity is to be spent] is the way in which *zakāt* is spent. For this reason, according to the soundest view, the only buried wealth subject to *zakāt* is gold and silver.

In respect to mines, no *zakāt* is due on anything taken out [of the ground] except gold and silver, on which, after it is extracted, ground, and purified, one-fourth of ten percent is payable as *zakāt*, according to the stronger of two opinions. It must also be of the required minimum value. As for the question of its being in one's possession for a complete year, there are two opinions.

Following the opinion that one-fifth is due [on mined gold and silver], then the [requirement] of one year's possession is not considered. Concerning the minimum amount, there are two opinions. The more likely of the two—and God most high knows best—is that it should be reckoned in value like merchandise for sale, since it is a kind of earning.

If, however, it is considered like a crop, then [by] the principle of ease, a year's possession is not required, but it must reach a minimum amount (*niṣāb*) just as crops must.

The safest course is to pay one-fifth of the value [of buried treasure or the products of mines], whether it be a small quantity

or large, gold and silver or something else, in order to be free of the doubtful elements found in these differences of opinion. Since they are conjectural and somewhat contradictory, it is dangerous to make an unequivocal pronouncement about them.

6. The Charity for Breaking the Fast (*Ṣadaqat al-fiṭr*)

Based on the saying of the Messenger of God ﷺ, this [form of *zakāt*, i.e., *ṣadaqat al-fiṭr*] is obligatory on every Muslim [male] from the food which he eats and provides [to his dependents], and is to be given on the day after the last day of Ramaḍān or on the night before that day.⁴ Its quantity is the amount (*ṣāʿ*) given by the Messenger of God ﷺ, equal to two and two-thirds *mann*,⁵ and it must be the same kind of staple that one eats or better. Thus, if [the giver's] main staple is wheat, it is not permitted [to give] barley. If, on the other hand, his normal staple consists of different sorts of grains, then he should choose the best of them and give a portion of it.

[This *zakāt*] is allotted to the same categories of recipients eligible to receive [normal] *zakāt* on wealth and should include all [eight]⁶ and it is not permissible to pay it in flour or roasted barley.

In addition, it is obligatory for every Muslim man to pay [this *zakāt*] for his wife, his slaves, his children, and all immediate relatives—father, mother, and children—who are financially dependent on him, meaning those whom he is obligated [by law] to support, based on the saying of the Prophet ﷺ, “Give in charity (*ṣadaqat al-fiṭr*) at the end of Ramaḍān on behalf of those for whom you provide.”⁷

If a slave is jointly owned, the payment [of this charity] is due on both owners, but if the slave is a disbeliever (*kāfir*), no payment is due.

4 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1503; and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 984.

5 Currently defined as between 2.3 to 3 kilograms.

6 These are defined in chapter 3.

7 Al-Daraqutnī, *Sunan*, 2:141; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 4:161.

If a wife should choose to pay [this charity] for herself, it is acceptable, but the husband may pay on her behalf, even without her permission. And if he has enough extra to pay for some of his dependents, he should do so, and give priority to the children whose dependency is certain, for the Messenger of God ﷺ gave priority to support of the child over support of the wife, and support of the wife over support of a servant.

It is indispensable for one who has wealth to know such rules of *fiqh*. However, rare situations beyond this [general treatment] may present themselves to him. When they do, he should seek a legal opinion, after having understood the [small] amount [that has been presented] here.



2

On the Payment of *Zakāt* and Its Inward and Outward Requisites

On the Outward Requisites

K NOW that there are five requisites for the one who pays *zakāt*

[1]

The first [requisite] is intention. This means that the person paying must formulate in his heart the intention to pay the obligatory *zakāt*, but he need not specify the precise wealth on which he is paying it. Thus, if he were paying *zakāt* on some wealth that was not present with him and were to say [as his intention]: “[I am paying] this [*zakāt*] on my wealth that is not present, provided that it is safe and sound, and if [it is] not, then let this be supererogatory (*nāfila*) [charity],” that would be allowed, for he did not specify what the wealth was. This applies to any property that is referred to in general terms.

Intention formed by a guardian takes the place of intention by someone not of sound mind or by a child, and the intention of a ruler can replace that of an owner who refuses to pay *zakāt*, but only with regard to the outward rules of this world, by which I

mean the portion [of wealth] that he is liable for. In respect to the hereafter, his debt remains until he himself returns to paying *zakāt*.

If the owner of some property appoints an agent to pay *zakāt* for him, and at that moment [the owner] expresses his intention to pay it, or entrusts the agent with the duty of expressing the intention for him, then that suffices [when the *zakāt* is actually paid], because entrusting someone to form an intention is, in itself, an intention.

[2]

The second requisite is to make haste in paying *zakāt*, whether at the end of the year or at the end of *Ramādān*. [In the latter case], the payment of *zakāt* must not be delayed to the day after *Ramādān*. The time when it is due begins with the setting of the sun on the last day of *Ramādān*; [this is] the [best] time to pay it. [It can be paid] early, anytime during the month of *Ramādān*.

To delay paying *zakāt* on wealth when someone has the means to do so is a sin, and if that wealth were destroyed or lost [while he delayed], the obligation to pay *zakāt* would remain. However, if he delayed because there were no deserving beneficiaries to pay it to and if, during that delay, the property were destroyed or lost, then the obligation to pay it would cease.

To pay *zakāt* early is permissible on the condition that the minimum amount [on which *zakāt* is due] has been reached and the period of one year is complete. It is also permissible to pay two years' *zakāt* [at one time], but if the beneficiary of this were to die before the year is up, or become an apostate, or become wealthy, or if the property of the one who paid in advance were lost or destroyed, or if he himself were to die, the sum that had been paid would not constitute *zakāt*, nor would it be returned unless there were a stipulation to that effect at the time when it was paid. Let the one who wishes to pay in advance be vigilant about the end of all things and the safest outcome.

[3]

The third requisite is that one form of wealth not be substituted for another based on value. Rather, what [*zakāt*] is paid with must be of the same type as the wealth it is being paid for. So, silver cannot be paid as *zakāt* on gold, nor gold on silver, even if the substitute is of greater value than that for which it is being substituted.

It may be that someone who does not understand al-Shāfi'ī's purpose in this would seek to facilitate matters by pointing out that the purpose [of *zakāt*] is to fill a need, but in saying this, he is far from true understanding! Yes, filling a need is part of the purpose of *zakāt*, but it is not the whole purpose. In fact, [with respect to their goals], there are three types of religious obligations enjoined by the law.

The first is pure worship, free of any human considerations or goals. An example of this [pure worship] is the casting of pebbles at the pillars [during the pilgrimage]. The purpose of the law [in ordering this] is only a test in which the servant demonstrates his devotion and servanthood by accomplishing an act whose meaning is not comprehensible to the rational mind. For if there is an action that is comprehensible to the rational mind, then the servant's nature aids and attracts him to it, and to that degree his devotion to God and servanthood are not demonstrated. True servanthood is shown by way of an action done for no other reason than to follow the commandment of the Lord. Most of the actions associated with the pilgrimage are of this type, even as the Prophet ﷺ indicated when, on donning his pilgrim's garb (*iḥrām*), he said, "Here I am at Your service [O God], on a true pilgrimage of complete devotion and servitude."

A second type of religious obligation, instead of being [purely] devotional, has a rationally intelligible human benefit as its goal. An example of this would be the repayment of a debt or the return of some property that was illegally seized. This need not be specified, nor is there any need to connect such an act with an expression of intention. Whenever what is due reaches the one to whom it is due, either in its original form or in some other acceptable form, the obligation is fulfilled and the legal claim is dropped.

Neither of these first two types of religious obligation is complex and both are easily understandable to all people.

The third type, however, is complex in that it combines both of these [aforementioned] purposes: human benefit and a test of devotion—the pure servanthood of casting the pebbles and the human benefit of restoring rights. This sort is rational in itself and if it is ordained by law, then it is obligatory to combine both meanings and not to forget the more subtle of the two—which is to express pure devotion and subjugation to God—in favor of the more evident of the two [this being human benefit]. Indeed, it may be that the more subtle is more important.

Zakāt is among this latter sort [of devotional acts], but only al-Shāfiʿī رحمته الله truly pays attention to this fact. To benefit the poor by fulfilling a need is a clear purpose and is the first to present itself to human understanding. The aspect of pure devotion comes, however, in following the [formal] details specified by the law. It is by reason of this that *zakāt* stands next to the prayer and pilgrimage as one of the [five] pillars of Islam. For without a doubt, it takes great effort for someone to distinguish the various types of wealth he might possess, then set aside portions of each, and finally distribute it to the eight lawful [beneficiaries], who are discussed later.

Taking license in fulfilling this does not diminish it as a way to benefit the poor, but it [diminishes it] as an expression of pure devotion. This aspect of pure devotion is certainly part of its purpose; this is shown by how [we] specify what should be paid in *zakāt*, a question that we have mentioned in books on the disagreements of the scholars. One of the clearest examples is in the fact that the law requires that for every five camels the *zakāt* should be one ewe, but while a ewe is substituted for a camel, gold and silver may not be substituted for each other. And if someone tries to explain this by [saying] that gold and silver were in short supply among the Bedouins, then how can one explain [the fact that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم] said, when a camel to be given as *zakāt* is younger than it what is required, then twenty dirhams or two ewes may be added in compensation. But, in respect to the two ewes, [he] did not mention¹ an exact value

¹ See section 1, at the end of the explanation of *zakāt* on livestock.

to be made up. Moreover, why did he specify twenty dirhams or two ewes, if some sort of garments and vessels could serve just as well in their place?

This and other details related to *zakāt* show that, unlike the pilgrimage, which consists wholly of devotional actions, *zakāt* combines both a practical and a devotional meaning.² Weak intellects, however, [that are] unable to comprehend complexities, have led to errors about it.

[4]

The fourth requisite is that the charity collected should not be sent from one town to another. The eyes of the destitute in every town look to that [charity] for their sustenance and if it is sent elsewhere, their hopes are crushed. According to one opinion, [distributing it elsewhere] is permissible, but it is better to spend it locally, in order to avoid the appearance of violating the norm. So let the *zakāt* collected for all the wealth of one town be distributed [first] in that town and then there is nothing wrong with spending [some of it] on [people who are] strangers [i.e., not residents] in that town.

[5]

The fifth requisite is that the one who is paying *zakāt* should divide the payment between the different types of recipients who are in area where he lives. The obligatory nature of this is [clear from] the words of God, may He be exalted,

Verily charity is only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect [charity] and for bringing hearts together [for Islam] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt

² The practical meaning is providing for the poor; the devotional meaning, which cannot necessarily be rationally explained, concerns some of the details, such as how the *zakāt* is calculated and distributed.

and for the cause of God and for the [stranded] traveler—an obligation [imposed] by God. And God is knowing and wise [9:60].

This is similar to the saying of a sick man [who expects death:], 'One-third of my wealth is for the poor and the needy.' This means there must be shared ownership.³ Acts of worship should not be done in haste and superficially.

Most lands lack two types of recipients, [namely], those whose hearts are being reconciled [to Islam] and those who work [collecting and distributing] *zakāt*. Four types may be found everywhere: the destitute, the needy, those in debt, and travelers, that is, wayfarers (*abnā' al-sabīl*). The two [remaining] types—those fighting battles and those in captivity (*mukātabūn*)—exist in certain places and not others. If five types of beneficiaries exist in one place, then the payer of the *zakāt* should divide it among them in equal or nearly equal portions, and assign a portion to each group.

Then he should divide each of those portions into three or more parts [to be distributed to those of each group], but there is no obligation [to make] each of those parts of equal measure. He may even divide it into ten or twenty parts, reducing the amount of each one. [But] it is not acceptable to increase or reduce the share of one category [of recipients in favor of another], nor may the share of one category be divided into fewer than three portions.

Thus, in respect to the *zakāt* due at the end of *Ramādān*, if there were five kinds [of the eight kinds of recipients ... present in the town ...],⁴ the one paying *zakāt* would divide the measure [of grain] among fifteen people. And if the total amount [of grain] to be given is only enough to give to [fourteen] people, he should try to make up the fifteenth portion from his wealth. And if the amount [of grain] that is due from him is not enough to divide among fifteen people, then he should partner with a number of others who are paying *zakāt*, and combine their payments. Then let them gather those recipients and give [the whole amount] to them so that they might apportion it among themselves. This is what must happen.

³ The commentary points out that in the Arabic of this verse, *li-l-fuqarā'i wa-l-masākīn*, the initial *lam* shows ownership, while the repetition of the conjunction *waw* ('and') shows that this ownership is shared.

⁴ Here the ellipses represent missing text, thus we do not have a complete sentence.

The Fine Points of the Inward Manners

Requisite in Giving *Zakāt*

Know [that] in giving *zakāt*, there are [inward] requisites that an aspirant traveling the way of the hereafter must fulfill.

[1]

The first requisite is to understand the obligation of *zakāt*, its meaning, its quality as a test [of devotion], and why it was made one of the pillars of Islam, even though it is not an act of physical worship, but rather a monetary transaction. Here, in fact, there are three meanings.

First, when someone pronounces the twofold testimony, it is an affirmation of divine oneness and a testimony that God alone is the one to be worshiped. But as a condition of the perfect fulfillment of this [testimony], there should not remain [in the heart of the] one who says it anyone or anything [more] beloved than God, the One, the Unique. Love does not admit partners and words alone have little value. The degree of love is tested when it is separated from its objects, and wealth is something beloved by people because it is the means [lit., tool] by which they enjoy this worldly life and come to love this world and flee from death, even though in death [they] will be meeting the [true] beloved. Thus, they are tested in their claim and asked to give up [some of] the wealth that they exalt and long for, as God most high says, *Indeed, God has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have heaven* [9:111]. Striving (*jihād*) for His sake means giving of one's self out of a longing to meet God عز وجل. It is easier, however, to give of one's possessions.

In understanding what it means to give of one's possessions, people fall into three categories.

There is one group who affirm the oneness of God, fulfill their pledge completely, and give away all their wealth without saving even a dinar or a dirham. In doing so, they refuse to ever incur

the obligation of *zakāt*. Thus, when one of them was asked, "How much *zakāt* is due on two hundred dirhams?" he answered, "From the common folk, the law requires five dirhams, but for us, it is everything!"

Thus, Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه gave the entirety of his wealth in charity and 'Umar رضي الله عنه gave half of his. When [the Prophet] صلى الله عليه وسلم asked 'Umar رضي الله عنه, "What have you left for your family?" he replied, "An amount equal to what I have given." And when he asked Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, "What have you left for your family?" he answered, "God and His Messenger," on which the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "The difference between you two is in the difference between your answers."⁵

Those of the second category have a rank lower than the first. They hold onto their wealth and await times of need and occasions for giving. Their intention in saving is to be able to meet their own needs, but without luxuries, and then to give what is left over through various acts of charity whenever they arise. For these people, charity is not limited solely to the amount stipulated by [the rules of] *zakāt*.

Among the Followers (*tābī'in*)⁶ were men such as al-Nakha'i, al-Sha'bī, 'Atā', and Mujāhid, who held that there are other rights upon wealth [that must] be paid [by Muslims] besides *zakāt*. For example, when it was asked of al-Sha'bī, "Is there a duty on wealth besides *zakāt*?" he replied, "Yes. Have you not heard the words of God most high, [Righteousness is...] and give wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves [2:177]?"

They also call to witness the words of God عز وجل *And spend out of what We have provided them* [2:3, 8:3, 22:35, 28:54, 32:16, 42:38], and also *O you who have believed! Spend from that which We have provided for you* [2:254]. They hold that these verses were not abrogated by the verses commanding *zakāt* but rather are among the rights of

⁵ The first part of this narration is found in Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1678, and al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 3675, while the response of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is found only in the version in Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 1:32.

⁶ The "Followers," refers to the generation that followed that of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Companions رضي الله عنهم. They did not see the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, but received the teachings directly from the Companions.

one Muslim on another and [this] means that whenever someone with wealth finds someone in need, he must try to relieve that need above and beyond what he pays in *zakāt*.

In respect to this question, the correct course, according to *fiqh*, is to relieve a pressing need, [because relieving] it becomes a collective obligation (*fardan 'alā kifāya*),⁷ for it is not permissible to let the life of a [fellow] Muslim be lost [i.e., to let a fellow Muslim die]. In relation to this issue, [some] say a wealthy person should not be required to do more toward relieving this need than to extend a loan, and that he should not be required to give anything else in charity other than what is due in *zakāt*. The opposite view, however, also exists, [that is], in certain situations he must give [beyond *zakāt*] and that it is not allowed for him to give [this] as a loan, for that would [further] burden the poor person who accepts it. Such are the differing views concerning this.

[The question of] loans reaches the lowest level, the level of the common folk, and this is the level of the third group: the people who limit themselves to fulfilling only what is obligatory, without adding to it or decreasing from it. This is the lowest rank and the common [faithful people] limit themselves to this rank because of their stinginess with wealth and their attraction to it, and [because of] the weakness of their love for the hereafter. Thus, God most high says, *If He should ask you for them and press you* [yuhfikum], *you would withhold [it], and He would expose your unwillingness* [47:37]. And here, the verb *yuhfikum* means "to urge or to press you." What a difference there is between the servant from whom God "has purchased his possessions and life in order that he might have heaven" and the servant whom God "will not press to give" in charity because of his stinginess. This, then, is one of the reasons for the commandment of God, glory be to Him, that His servants give away their wealth in charity.

The second meaning of *zakāt* is purification [of the soul] from avarice, which is one of the destructive [sins], as the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

⁷ *Fard al-kifāya* is an obligation on the community which is fulfilled for everyone if certain people among them undertake it. Offering the funeral prayer is another example of this.

said, "There are three [sins that] lead to ruin: greed that is obeyed, desires that are pursued, and self-conceit."⁸

And God most high has said, *And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul—it is those who will be the successful* [59:09, 64:16]. In the Quarter of Perils [of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*] concerning the sins that lead to destruction, there will be an explanation of why [greed] is considered destructive and how to be free of it.

One way, however, to become free of the taint of avarice is to accustom oneself to giving. The love we might have for a thing cannot be removed except by compelling ourselves to part with it, until this becomes a habit. *Zakāt*, then, is significant because it purifies the one who accomplishes it from the foulness of destructive greed. And the degree to which he is purified is in proportion to how much he gives away, the happiness he feels in doing so, and the joy he experiences in spending it for God most high.

The third meaning [of *zakāt*] is [a way to] express gratitude for God's blessings. God عز وجل gives His servants blessings both in their bodies and in their wealth, thus, physical worship [may be seen] as gratitude for the former and charity [may be seen] as gratitude for the latter. How vile indeed is anyone who could look upon a poor man in dire need and not give one-fourth or one-tenth of his wealth in charity, as an expression of gratitude to God most high that he himself has enough and does not have to beg from others.

[2]

The second requisite concerns the time of payment. One of the manners of the people of *dīn* is to hasten to pay what is required [even before] its time. [They do] this so they might demonstrate their fervor to obey [God's commandments] by bringing gladness to the hearts of the needy, and [they] race against the obstacles of time that keep people from accomplishing good [deeds]. They know

⁸ Al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-awsat*, 5448; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 2:343; al-Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-imān*, 731.

that in delaying good deeds there are many pitfalls, including the risk of sin by delaying [an action] past its required time. Whenever a person feels the impulse toward good, he should act on it, for it is an inspiration from an angel.⁹ Also, "The heart of the believer is between the two fingers of the Most Merciful,"¹⁰ and how quickly [the heart] may turn! And Satan threatens poverty and orders [you] to immorality,¹¹ and his suggestion comes just after the inspiration from the angel. So let [the servant of God] seize the moment [to do good] when it arrives.

If he pays the entirety of his *zakāt* at one time, let him designate a month and try to make it during the meritorious times of the year, so that it might be a greater means of approach [to God] and greater in reward. The month of Muḥarram is such a time because it is the first month in the year and [it is] also one of the sacred months. Ramaḍān is such a month; it [was] a time when the Prophet ﷺ, who was the most generous of human beings, was "like a rain-bearing wind that holds nothing back."¹² The special excellence of the night of power (*laylat al-qadr*), in which the Qur'ān was sent down, is also in Ramaḍān. Mujāhid said, "Do not say 'Ramaḍān,' for that is one of the names of God most high, but say 'the month of Ramaḍān.'"¹³

Dhū l-Hijja is another month with great merit, since it is one of the sacred months and also the month of the greater pilgrimage (*al-ḥajj al-akbar*);¹⁴ the known days (*al-ayyām al-ma'lūmāt*),¹⁵ which are the first ten days of the month; and the numbered days (*al-ayyām*

⁹ The "inspiration of the angel" (*limmatu al-malak*) and "suggestion of Satan" are mentioned in a *ḥadīth* in the *sunan* collections al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2988; al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 10985; and elsewhere. Al-Ghazālī treats this in depth in *The Exposition of the Marvels of the Heart*, book 21 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

¹⁰ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2654, with the wording "The hearts of the children of Adam are between the two fingers of the most Merciful."

¹¹ Paraphrasing the verse, *Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while God promises you His forgiveness and bounty* [2:268].

¹² This paraphrases a *ḥadīth* in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 6; and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2308.

¹³ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 26:239; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 4:201.

¹⁴ He uses this term to refer to the pilgrimage and distinguish it from the 'umra, which can be done in any month.

¹⁵ See the verse: . . . and mention the name of God on known days . . . [22:28].

al-ma'dūdāt),¹⁶ which are [also called] the days of *tashrīq*.¹⁷ In the month of Ramadān, the most meritorious days are the last ten, while in Dhū l-Hijja, they are the first ten.

[3]

The third requisite is [to keep charity] secret. [Giving charity] should be far removed from any desire to be seen or talked about. The Prophet ﷺ said, "The best charity is when someone who has little strives in secret to help someone who has nothing."¹⁸

And one of the learned said, "[There are] three things among the treasures of goodness, and one of them is to conceal charity."¹⁹

The Prophet ﷺ also said,

When a servant does some good deed in private, God records it as a good [deed] done in private. Then, if he shows it, it is moved from what is private to what is public. But if he talks about, it is moved from what is private and what is public to what is done out of a desire to be seen.²⁰

[There is] also a well-known *ḥadīth* that mentions the seven people whom God will shade on the day when there is no shade except His; one of them is "a person who gives in charity such that his left hand does not know what his right hand is giving."²¹

And there is a report (*ḥabār*) that states: "Charity given in secret extinguishes the wrath of God."

And God most high says, *but if you conceal it [your charity] and give it to the poor, it is better for you [2:271]*.

¹⁶ Mentioned in 2:203.

¹⁷ *Tashrīq*, literally means "facing the east." These are the three days following the tenth of Dhū l-Hijja (the day of the sacrifice), during which strips of meat are hung to be preserved; they face the rising sun and thus get the best portion of sunlight in which to dry.

¹⁸ Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 5:178; Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 361.

¹⁹ Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 7:117; Abū Ṭalīb al-Makki, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:107.

²⁰ Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:61.

²¹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1423; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1031.

So the reason to keep charity secret is in order to remain free of the faults of wanting people to see or hear about your good deeds. The Prophet ﷺ said, "God does not accept good deeds from anyone who does them out of a desire to be talked about or seen, nor from one who reminds others of the favors he has done for them."²² Someone who talks about the charity he gives, wants [it] to be discussed, and someone who gives it in a gathering of people, wants [it] to be seen. To give in secret and be silent concerning it [will bring] deliverance from those faults.

This is why some have gone to great lengths to hide their charity, even so that the recipient does not know the giver. Some, for example, would put it in the hand of a blind man or drop it in the path of a poor man or place it where he would sit so that he would see what was given but not who gave it. Others would fold it into the garment of a poor person as he slept, or convey it to the poor by way of some intermediary, so that he would not know the giver, making the intermediary vow to remain silent concerning the identity of the giver. All this was done in the hope that the wrath of the Lord عز وجل toward them might be extinguished and [in order] to guard themselves against the desire that others might see or hear about their charity.

If it is not possible for a person to give without being known to a single person, then his safest course is to entrust someone with the duty of giving to some needy person unknown to the giver, for in knowing who the recipient is there may be a desire to be seen and a desire to remind the recipient of his favor toward him, whereas in knowing only the intermediary, there is only the desire to be seen. Whenever the whole goal in giving becomes a desire to be known, the deed itself is invalidated. This is because even while *zakāt* may remove someone's greed and weaken his love of wealth, the love of high rank has even more power over the ego than the love of wealth. True, both are destructive sins in respect to the hereafter, but while avarice will be transformed in the grave into something that resembles a stinging scorpion, ostentation will be transformed into something that resembles the most poisonous of snakes, and

²² Ibn al-Mubārak, *Zuhd*, 83; al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-mufrad*, 606.

a human being must weaken or slay them both in order to repel or lessen their harm. If he [accomplishes an action] for the purpose of its being seen or discussed, it is as if he were feeding a part of the scorpion to the snake: as much as he weakens one, he strengthens the other. Indeed, it would be easier for him to simply leave it alone.

Acting in accordance with the demands of these faults only strengthens them, while striving against them and opposing them weakens them, so what benefit is it to oppose avarice with a desire to be seen, thus weakening the lesser of the two by strengthening the stronger?

The inner mysteries of these matters will be dealt with in the Quarter of Perils.²³

[4]

The fourth requisite is to give charity publicly, if it is known that by doing so, others will be encouraged to do the same. In doing this, however, [the giver] needs to protect his soul from ostentatiousness, as we discuss in the book on ostentation.²⁴ If God most high says, *If you disclose your charity, it is good* [2:271], this is because it may be something others imitate or because someone is asking for charity from a gathering of people and the act of giving should not be abandoned out of fear of ostentation. In this case, one should indeed give while at the same time guarding his soul as much as possible from the desire to be seen.

In making charity public, there is a third fault, in addition to reminding the recipient of one's favor to him and wishing to be seen; this is the fault of disclosing to others the state of a poor man who may be hurt by being seen as such. If, however, someone begs in public, he himself is disclosing his state to others and so there is no sense in trying not to show it. This case is analogous to making someone's hidden vice public. If he himself conceals it, then it is

²³ The third quarter of the books of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*, that is, books 21 to 30.

²⁴ *The Censure of Fame and Hypocritical Ostentation*, book 28 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

forbidden to make it public or spy on him or gossip about him. If he commits such sins in public, then the punishment levied against him announces [his offense], but he himself is the cause of this, even as the Prophet ﷺ said, "It is not backbiting [to mention the offense of] someone who has no shame."²⁵

God most high also says, *spend from what We have provided for them, secretly and publicly* [13:22], commending public charity as well as private charity because of the benefits it holds in encouraging others. But let the servant carefully consider the balance between the benefit of public charity and what is forbidden concerning it, for such may vary under different situations and with different people. In some situations, with some people, giving in public may indeed be better. For anyone who knows its advantages and pitfalls and does not view it with the eye of desire, what is right and more fitting will be clear in every state.

[5]

The fifth requisite is that the giver not ruin his charity by reminding [others] of his generosity (*mann*) or by insult (*adhā*). God most high has said, *do not invalidate your charities with reminders or injury* [2:264].

According to some [of the commentators], "reminding others of your generosity" means mentioning it, while "insult" means "making it public."

Sufyān said, "Anyone who displays *mann* [toward the one he gives to] invalidates his charity," and when asked what *mann* meant, he said, "To mention [your charity] and talk about it."

It has also been said that *mann* means to expect service from someone after having given him charity, and *adhā* means to shame him because he is poor.

Yet others have said that *mann* means to [behave with] pride toward another because [one] gave to him in charity, while *adhā* means to criticize or rebuke him for begging.

²⁵ Ibn 'Adī, *al-Kāmil*; al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan al-kubrā*, 10:210.

And the Prophet ﷺ said, "God does not accept the charity of one who reminds others of his generosity."²⁶

In my view, if someone habitually reminds those to whom he gives of his favor to them, the root of that [fault] is in the state of his heart; it then branches out to the actions of the tongue and the limbs. That root, [the way] the giver sees himself as one showing goodness and favor [to another], is not reality; in fact, the poor man is actually the one showing goodness to the giver, by accepting from him what God ﷻ requires the giver to give. By accepting [the giver's] charity, he is purifying [the giver] and saving him from the fire and if [the recipient] had not accepted it, the giver would have continued to bear the burden of that obligation. Therefore, the giver should see the favor [as coming] from the poor man, for making his hand a representative of God ﷻ to receive what is due to God ﷻ, even as the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Charity falls first into the hand of God most high before it falls into the hand of the supplicant."²⁷

Let the giver of charity realize, therefore, that he is actually rendering what is due to God ﷻ, and that the poor man is taking his provision from God most high, after it passed through the hands of the one who renders it to God ﷻ. Indeed, if someone has a debt to another human being, and he assigns the duty of paying the debt to his slave or his servant, either of whom are completely dependent on him for their provision, that servant would be considered an ignorant fool to think that the recipient of the debt was beholden to him in any way at the moment he handed him the repayment. Rather, thanks are due to the one who has done well by the slave and provided him with his daily provision, while he himself is only carrying out what he has been charged to do by the one who owns him, in order to please him. His efforts are thus for his own good and no one else is beholden to him.

As soon as someone understands the three meanings we have mentioned concerning the obligation of *zakāt*, or even one of them, he will stop seeing himself as benefiting anyone but his own soul, as he spends his wealth to show his love for God most high,

²⁶ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 106.

²⁷ Al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, 11:405; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 4:81.

or to purify his soul from the vice of avarice, or to give thanks for the blessing of wealth, hoping thereby that it might be increased.²⁸ Whatever the case may be, there can be no dealings between him and a poor man until he sees himself as the one deriving benefit. Whenever he is ignorant of this and sees himself as the benefactor, the various meanings of *mann* that we have mentioned will appear in his outward behavior. He will talk about [what he has given], show it off, and seek something in return, be it thanks, supplication on his behalf, [some] service, or respect and veneration by expecting the recipient to attend to his affairs, or show him special deference in an assembly, or to be his supporter in [all] matters. All of these are the [outward] fruits of *mann*, while its inward significance is what we have mentioned.

[With regard to] injury (*adhā*), its outward manifestations are rebuke, blame, coarse speech, disapproving looks, public humiliation, and various other sorts of disdain, all of which spring from two inner sources:

First is a person's aversion to parting with any of his wealth and [because] this is hard for his ego, it inevitably results in making him ill-tempered.

Second, he considers himself better than the poor man and believes that the poor man, because of his need, is his inferior.

Both of these also arise from ignorance.

To hate to part with wealth [given in charity] is a kind of insanity. Anyone who hates to give a dirham in exchange for what is equal to a thousand [dirhams] is completely mad, for he knows at the same time that he is giving of his wealth to seek the pleasure of God ﷻ and recompense in the abode of the hereafter, and this is nobler, even, than seeking to purify himself from the vice of avarice or to give thanks in hopes of increase. However one views this, there is no way to justify this aversion.

The second of these two is also [evidence of] ignorance. For if [the giver of charity] truly knew the way in which poverty is superior to wealth, and truly knew the dangers that the wealthy face, he would in no way deprecate a poor man. On the contrary, he would seek his

²⁸ Referring to the verse, *If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]* [14:07].

blessing and even wish for his rank, for [as the Prophet ﷺ said], "the righteous people among the wealthy will enter heaven fifty years after the poor"²⁹ and also, "By the Lord of the Ka'ba, [the wealthy] are the losers!" And when Abū Dharr asked who they were, he answered, "All those who have wealth in abundance, except the ones who say, 'Here ... here ... here...' [as they give to those] in front of them, behind them, to their right, and to their left... And few are they, indeed. On the day of resurrection, the camels, cattle, or sheep of someone who did not pay *zakāt* on those animals will return to him, [more] huge and [more] fat than they ever were, and they will ram him with their horns, and trample him under their hooves, and when the last of them is finished, the first will begin again—this until all human beings have been judged."³⁰

Moreover, how can he deprecate the poor man when God most high has placed this latter subservient to him, for it is by the poor man's labor that the rich man earns his wealth, increases it, and tries to keep it to the extent of his needs. It is incumbent on him to hand over to the poor man the extent of his need and to withhold from him any excess wealth that would be a detriment to him if he received it. The wealthy man therefore labors to provide the poor man with his provision and differs from him only to the extent that he must also redress wrongs, live with difficulties, and keep watch over his extra wealth until he dies, when it will be consumed by his adversaries!

Whenever a person's aversion [to giving] is replaced by joy and happiness in the fact that God most high has accorded him the means by which to give what is obligatory and has also brought him the poor man to accept his charity and thus relieve the giver of his burden, then the harm the latter might cause by rebuking [a petitioner, with words or] disapproving looks will disappear and be replaced by rejoicing, praise, and acceptance of the favor.

Such are the elements that give rise to *mann* and *adhā*.

²⁹ This paraphrases a *ḥadīth* in al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2354, and Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 4122.

³⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīh*, 1460, 6638; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīh*, 990.

Then if you were to ask, "Because this question of seeing ourselves as benefactors is rather vague, is there not some way to test the heart and know whether [this illusion] afflicts us?"

Know that for this there is an exact and clear test. Let us imagine the following: Suppose the poor man committed some offense against us or aligned himself with one of our adversaries. Then would our disapproval of him be greater because he had received our charity? If so, then our charity is still tainted by *mann*, since after giving it we expected [something] from him that we would not have expected otherwise.

If you then say: "This is still something vague and no one's heart is free of it. So what is its remedy?" Then know that it does have a cure, both inwardly and outwardly.

Inwardly, the cure rests in being aware of the realities that we have already mentioned. That is, in understanding the obligation of *zakāt* and [understanding] that the poor man is actually doing us a favor by accepting our charity and purifying us of greed.

Outwardly, the remedy is for the one burdened by *mann* to accomplish certain good works, for deeds that arise from virtue will color the heart with virtue. The mysteries of this will be explained in the final part of this book.

This is why some of [the pious] used to place their charity in front of a poor man and take on the role of a supplicant standing before him and entreating him to accept it; thus, they became the beggars and experienced for themselves how it feels to be rejected.

Others used to offer their charity on their open palms so that the poor man's hand might be the upper.³¹

Whenever 'Ā'isha and Umm Salama sent charity to a poor man, they said to the one who delivered it, "Remember the supplication he makes for us," and then [they] supplicated the same for the poor man, saying, "This is in return for that. May our charity be sincere."³²

They never expected a supplication from the recipient, for this would be like seeking compensation, but [they] returned any supplication that was made with one like it. This was also the wont of 'Umar b.

³¹ This is in keeping with the *ḥadīth* that states, "The upper hand is better than the lower hand." Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīh*, 1427; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīh*, 1033.

³² As related in Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:109.

al-Khattāb and his son ‘Abdallāh رضي الله عنه. This is how the people of the heart would cure their hearts, for there is no external cure for the heart except such deeds that lead to abasement, humility, and the acceptance of favor. And as for the internal cure, that [comes from] the knowledge we have mentioned. So one is by way of deeds, the other by way of knowledge, and there is no treatment for the heart except by administering this compound [that is] made up of both.

This condition in respect to *zakāt* is like the condition of humble reverence in respect to the prayer. Just as the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “A person has nothing from his prayer except that of which he was conscious,”³³ he also said, “God does not accept the charity of one who reminds others of his generosity,”³⁴ and God عز وجل says, *do not invalidate your charities with reminders or injury* [2:264].

And as for the ruling of the jurist (*faqīh*) who says that charity is fulfilled when it is [physically] accomplished, with or without the conditions [we have mentioned], that is based on another *ḥadīth* whose meaning we have alluded to in the book on prayer.³⁵

[6]

The sixth requisite is that the giver see his gift as something small. Should [the giver] consider it something great, he would exalt in it, and conceit is among the sins that lead to ruin and render good works vain, even as the words of God most high attest, *on the day of Hunayn, when your great number pleased you, it did not avail you at all* [9:25].

It has also been said that whenever an act of obedience is seen as paltry in the eyes of the worshiper, it becomes great in the eyes of God عز وجل and whenever a sin is seen as major in the eyes of the sinner, it is seen as paltry in the eyes of God عز وجل.

And they have also said that an act of devotion is completed by three things: A servant considers it insignificant, he hastens to

³³ Abū Nu‘aym, *Hilya*, 7:61; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 796.

³⁴ Muslim, *Saḥīh*, 106.

³⁵ See *The Mysteries of the Prayer*, book 4 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*, 40.

accomplish it, and he keeps it hidden. However, considering an act of charity important is not the same as reminding a recipient of your generosity or following it by injury. A man who spends his wealth for the construction of a mosque or a citadel may consider it something major and yet do so without reminders of his generosity and without injury. Still, [a certain amount of] conceit runs through all devotional deeds, and its remedy is knowledge and action.

This knowledge [involves] understanding that ten percent or one-fourth of ten percent is a small fraction of a large sum, and so [in giving this as *zakāt*], a person is accepting the lowest rank, as we have mentioned in connection with understanding the obligatory. Given that fact, how can he see it as something significant? He should rather be ashamed of its paltriness.

If, instead, he gives the maximum—all or most of his wealth in charity—rather than feeling proud of it, let him consider from whence it came and for what he is spending it. All wealth belongs to God عز وجل and God has benefited him by first giving him that wealth and then according him the chance to spend it [in charity]. So let a servant not feel proud of giving for the sake of God, when in fact, [what he gives] already belongs to God.

And if his station is such that he looks toward the hereafter and spends his wealth in hopes of the recompense found there, still he should not make much of what he gives, for what he hopes for in return is something many times more precious.

In respect to deeds, this means that he should give with a sense of shame for the miserliness that compels him to withhold the remainder of his wealth from God عز وجل. So it is an act better done with humility and shame, the way one would feel if he was asked to return something that had been left with him and instead he returned some of it, but also kept some of it. All wealth belongs to God عز وجل and to spend all of it in charity is something beloved to God, glory be to Him, but if He has not commanded that of His servant, it is because of how difficult it would be for him, because of his human greed, even as God عز وجل says, *If He should ask you for them and press you, you would withhold [them], and He would expose your unwillingness* [47:37].

[7]

The seventh requisite: What one gives in charity should be the most excellent, beloved, sweetest, and purest portion of his wealth. For God most high is pure and accepts only what is pure.³⁶ If [the ownership of] what is given is in some way questionable, and it is possible that it is not absolutely his, it will not fulfill what needs to be fulfilled. In a *hadith* related by Anas b. Mālik, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Blessed be the servant who spends [in charity] from wealth he has earned without sin."³⁷

[Moreover], if the portion of his possessions set aside for charity is not the best, it is at the very least poor comportment on his part to keep the best for himself, or [for] his servant or family, and thus prefer other [than God] to God ﷻ! If he were to treat a guest like that, giving him the worst food in his house, he would surely feel disgusted with himself. This is to view it in relation to God ﷻ.

If he views it in relation to his own soul, however, and its recompense in the hereafter, no rational person truly prefers others over himself, and he himself has nothing of his wealth except what he gives in charity, which makes it endure, or [what he] consumes, which makes it disappear.³⁸ What we consume satisfies a need for that moment, but no sane person limits his vision to just this fleeting moment, without making provision for the future. God most high has said,

O you who have believed, spend from the good things which you have earned and from that which We have produced for you from the earth. And do not aim toward the defective therefrom, spending [from that] while you would not take it [yourself] except with closed eyes (ighmād) [2:267].

³⁶ This *hadith* appears in Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1015.

³⁷ Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, 5:71; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 3:202; al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan al-kubrā*, 4:182.

³⁸ This paraphrases a *hadith* found in Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2958: "The child of Adam says, 'My wealth! My wealth! O child of Adam, what do you have of your wealth except what you eat, and then [it] is gone, or [what you] wear, and then it is worn out, or give in charity, and then [it] endures?'"

Here, "with eyes closed" (*ighmād*) means with aversion or shame. This is not what you should choose to give to your Lord.

There is also a tradition that states: "A single dirham may outstrip a thousand." This is [true, because] someone may take it from the best and most wholesome portion of his wealth and give it with contentment and joy, while someone else might take one hundred thousand dirhams from the portion of his wealth he abhors and give [it] without preferring God ﷻ by [giving of what] he loves. Even thus God most high reproaches a people who ascribe to Him what they abhor: *They attribute to God that which they dislike, and their tongues assert the lie that they will have the best [from Him]. Assuredly [lit., 'No.']. . . [16:62].* Some recite this verse with a stop after the word "Assuredly!" (*lā*) [no], which stresses the denial of what they say, and then [they] begin anew with the rest of the verse: *They will have the fire*, which means that they earn the fire by ascribing to God what they themselves abhor.

[8]

The eighth requisite is to seek out recipients who are truly worthy. That is, one should not settle for just anyone among the eight groups of people who may receive charity.

For among the general [population] of people there are some who have particular qualities, and one should search for these qualities, which number six.

[The Six Qualities]

First [quality]: He should look for those who are pious (*atqiyā'*), who have turned away from the world, and devoted themselves to the affairs of the hereafter. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Do not eat except from the food of the pious, nor give food to eat except to the pious."³⁹ This is because a pious man will be aided [by that

³⁹ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4832, with the wording, "Do not keep company with any

food] in his devotional life and by helping him, you will share [in the rewards] of his practice.

And he also said *صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ*, "With your food, feed the pious, and in your good works give preference to the faithful."⁴⁰ And in another tradition, "Invite the one you love, for the sake of God most high, [to share] food."⁴¹

A certain scholar used to prefer to give food only to the indigent Sufis. When it was said to him, "It would be better if you included all the needy in your charity," he said, "No! These Sufis care about nothing but God, glory be to Him! If they are struck by the need for food, the focus of one of them might be distracted, and verily, if I can help strengthen the aspiration of even one of them toward God *عَزَّ وَجَلَّ*, it is more beloved to me than to give to a thousand who aspire to this world." This was related to Junayd, and he agreed with it, saying, "Verily this man is one of the friends of God!" And he added, "It is a long time since I heard better words than these."

After this, Junayd was told that this man had fallen into hard times and was going to close down his shop, whereupon Junayd sent him some money and said, "Use this as capital but do not close down your shop, for commerce should not harm a man like you!" The man was a grocer and he would not take money from the poor [Sufis] for anything they wanted in his shop.

[2]

Second [quality]: One should give to someone among the people of knowledge, for that will help him [in his pursuit of] knowledge, and seeking knowledge, when the intention is correct, is the most noble form of worship.

Ibn al-Mubārak would give charity exclusively to the people of knowledge, and when it was said to him,

except the faithful nor eat the food of any except the pious."

⁴⁰ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 3:55; Abū Yaʿlā, *Musnad*, 1106; Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 616.

⁴¹ Ibn al-Mubārak, *Zuhd*, 366.

"If only you gave to more people!" he said, "I do not know—after the station of prophethood—anything better than the station of the learned. If one of them must occupy his heart with his poverty, he will have no time for learning. So it is better for him to be free to pursue knowledge."

[3]

Third [quality]: The recipient should be sincere in his piety and knowledge in his affirmation of God's unity (*tawḥīdihi*), which in this case means that when he receives what is given, he praises and thanks God *عَزَّ وَجَلَّ*, sees that the blessing comes from Him, and [he does not] see any intermediary. Such a person is the most grateful servant to God, glory be to Him, and [he] sees that all blessings are from Him. Thus, in Luqmān's counsel to his son, we find the words, "Do not place any other benefactor between you and God and consider a benefit that comes from anyone else a liability."⁴²

In respect to the one who give thanks to someone other than God, glory be to Him, it is as if he does not know the Benefactor and does not see that the intermediary is compelled by and subjected to God *عَزَّ وَجَلَّ* in his action. For it is God most high who, in His control over him, placed the impulse to act in his heart and then made secondary causes easy for him. So in his giving, he is compelled, and even if he wished to do otherwise, he would not be able to after God *عَزَّ وَجَلَّ* placed in his heart [the understanding] that to accomplish this action is for the good of his *dīn* and his worldly life as well. Whenever motivation is strong, it summons up human will and ability such that the servant is unable to resist its power within him, nor [can he] put off acting on it. But it is God *عَزَّ وَجَلَّ* who creates those motivations and causes them to stir, God who removes weakness or hesitation, and God who gives humans the ability to act in response to them. Anyone who realizes this has no regard except toward the One who is the Cause of all causes, and this realization is more beneficial to the giver of charity than receiving

⁴² Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Zuhd*, 2239; al-Dīnawarī, *al-Majālisa wa-jawāhir al-ʿilm*.

verbal praise and thanks in return [for giving]. Such lip service is of little use, whereas [the chance] to help a servant who has truly realized God's Oneness should not be wasted.

Moreover, the one who praises someone when he gives to him and supplicates goodness for him will also blame him when he does not [give] and [then he will] invoke evil on him, for the states [of one in need] vary.

It has been related that the Prophet ﷺ once sent some charity to a poor man and said to the one who delivered it, "Remember what he says when he takes it." When the person charged with delivering it came to the poor man and gave it to him, the latter said, 'Praise be to God who does not forget the one who remembers Him, and does not neglect the one who thanks Him!' Then he continued, 'O God, verily You never forget [this poor man] so grant that [this poor man] may never forget You!' When this was related to the Messenger of God ﷺ, it pleased him and he said, "I knew that he was going to say that." Look, then, how that poor man's attention was focused solely on God.

The Prophet ﷺ also once said to a man, "Repent." And the man replied, "I repent to God alone, not to Muhammad!" At this, the Prophet ﷺ said, "He knows to whom this right belongs!"

When the innocence of 'Ā'isha رضي الله عنها was revealed in the story about the false gossip,⁴³ [her father] Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه said to her, "Rise and go kiss the head of the Messenger of God ﷺ." She answered, "By God, I will not. I thank no one but God." Hearing this, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Leave her, O Abū Bakr." And in another version, she is reported to have said to Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, "In this, praise is due to God, not to you nor to your companion." The Messenger of God ﷺ did not blame her for saying

43 He is referring to the incident when the Prophet's wife, 'Ā'isha رضي الله عنها, lost her necklace while traveling with an expedition and was inadvertently left behind by the rest of the group while she was searching for it. Eventually, one of the emigrants to Medina, Ṣafwān b. Mu'attal, who had been riding quite a distance behind the rest, found her, gave her his camel to ride, and continued the journey leading his camel on foot. The sight of the two returning to the group alone led to gossip among certain people, and this situation continued until the revelation of 24:11-17 exonerated her of blame and admonished the faithful to avoid gossip and slander. See Lings, *Muhammad*, 240-243.

this, even though the revelation came to her on the tongue of the Messenger ﷺ.⁴⁴

To view things apart from God, glory be to Him, is an attribute of disbelievers, as God most high said, *And when God is mentioned alone, the hearts of those who do not believe in the hereafter shrink with aversion, but when those [worshipped] other than Him are mentioned, immediately they rejoice* [39:45]. Someone who does not purify himself inwardly from seeing intermediaries is [like someone] persisting in a hidden form of polytheism (*al-shirk al-khafī*). Let him fear God, glory be to Him, and purify his affirmation of God's unity from the murkiness and stains of joining partners with God.

[4]

The fourth [quality]: The recipient of charity should be someone who conceals his need and is not constantly grumbling and complaining, or one of those honorable people whose wealth is gone, but whose character remains such that he maintains the appearance of being well-off. Of these, God most high has said, *An ignorant [person] would think them self-sufficient because of their restraint, but you will know them by their [characteristic] sign. They do not ask people persistently [or at all]* [2:273], which is to say, they do not annoy people by asking for charity, for they are made rich by their certitude and ennobled by their patience. Such is the kind of person that one should seek by scrutinizing the people of *dīn* everywhere and trying to discover the inward dispositions of the people of goodness and virtue. The reward of giving charity to such people is many times greater than of giving it to those who announce their needs and implore those they ask.

44 And for this reason Abū Bakr thought she should have thanked him, according to the Arab tradition of rewarding those bearing good news.

[5]

The fifth quality to look for in a recipient: He should be someone who supports others, or someone who is disabled by illness, or by other causes, one who is [described] by the meaning of God's words, [*Charity is*] *for the poor who have been restricted for the cause of God* [2:273]. This means they are kept back from the path of the hereafter by some infirmity, or hardship, or condition of the heart. [*They*] *are unable to move about in the land* [2:273], for their wings have been clipped and their feet are shackled. For these reasons, 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ would give the people of the house [of the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ] a flock of at least ten sheep and the Prophet himself صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ would give according to the size of the family.⁴⁵ And when 'Umar was asked what the hardest tribulation was, he answered, "To have many dependents and little wealth."⁴⁶

[6]

Sixth quality: They should be close relatives or kin, for in this case, the charitable gift is also a means of honoring the bonds of kinship, and in this there are countless rewards. 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ is reported to have said,

To give a single dirham to one of my brothers is more beloved to me than giving twenty in charity [to strangers], and to give him twenty, is more beloved to me than giving one hundred in charity, and to give him one hundred is more beloved to me than buying a slave his freedom.⁴⁷

Close friends and spiritual brothers should be given precedence over mere acquaintances, just as relatives should be given precedence over non-relatives. Let [the giver] observe these fine points.

45 As mentioned in Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 2953.

46 Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *al-Iyyāl*, 443.

47 Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:109.

These, then, are the qualities [one should] seek [when giving] and while there are various degrees in each [category], the giver should seek out the highest. If he finds someone who combines a number of these qualities, that is the greatest treasure and supreme prize. If he makes an effort [to find such a recipient] and succeeds, he has double the reward, and even if he fails, he still has one reward.

One of his two rewards is in [his] state of being purified of miserliness, affirming the love of God عَزَّ وَجَلَّ in his heart, and striving to obey Him. These are the qualities that grow stronger in his heart and result in a deep longing for the meeting with God عَزَّ وَجَلَّ and the last day. The second reward is the benefit that comes to him from the supplication and aspiration of one of those recipients, for the hearts of the righteous affect both the present and the future. So if the giver succeeds, these are the two rewards he gains, while if he fails, he gains the first but not the second.

This is how the one who strives gains a twofold reward, both in this case and in all others. And God knows best.



3

On the Recipient of Charity, the Conditions Under Which Someone Qualifies for It, and the Recipient's Duty on Receiving It

The Conditions Under Which Someone Qualifies to Receive Charity

KNOW that only a free Muslim who belongs to one of the eight groups mentioned in the book of God عزَّ وجلَّ and is neither of the Hāshimī or Muṭṭalib lineage legally qualifies to receive *zakāt*. [*Zakāt*] may not be given to a disbeliever, a slave, or someone of Hāshimī or Muṭṭalib descent. Minors or the mentally incompetent may be given *zakāt*, but it must be [physically] received by their legal guardian.

Let us now mention the eight categories of people [who may receive *zakāt*].

[1]

The first category is [those who are] utterly destitute (*faqīr*, pl. *fuqarā'*). The *faqīr* is someone who has neither wealth nor the ability to earn a living. If a person has enough for one day and clothes on his back,

then he is not [utterly] destitute (*faqīr*), but rather needy (*miskīn*), but if he has only enough food for half a day, he is destitute. And if he has a shirt,¹ but no towel, shoes, or pants, and the value of the shirt is worth less than what he would need to purchase these other articles of clothing, then he is still destitute because of this lack and his inability to fill it. But it should not be stipulated that the destitute is someone who only has something to cover his nakedness, since this is an extreme [view] and for the most part such people cannot be found.

Moreover, a person does not cease to be destitute because he begs habitually as this is, as it were, [his] way of earning money. If, however, a person has the ability to earn a living [by work], then he is not in the category of the destitute. And if he is considered destitute only because he needs a certain tool with which he could earn a living, then it is permissible to buy him the tool he needs.

If he is able to earn a living, [but] only through work that is disreputable, he is still destitute. And if he is studying *fiqh*, and working for a living would prevent him from his studies, then his ability to work is disregarded: he is still destitute.

But if someone is living a life devoted completely to worship, and working to earn a living would prevent him from maintaining his daily devotions or the hours for superogatory practices, then it is preferable for him to seek work, even as the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "To seek what is lawful is an obligation (*farīda*) second only to accomplishing the obligatory acts of worship (*farīda*)."² And by "seeking what is lawful," he meant striving to earn a living.

In fact, 'Umar رضي الله عنه is reported to have said, "To earn a living through something dubious is better than begging."³

Finally, if someone is being supported by his parent or by someone whose duty it is to care for him, such a life is much easier than earning a living, and he would not be considered destitute (*faqīr*).

¹ *Qamīṣ*; by which is meant (in this context) a long shirt that reaches below the knees

² Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, 10:74; al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan al-kubrā*, 6:128.

³ Ibn Abi l-Dunyā, *Islāḥ al-māl*, 323; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd*, 18:329.

[2]

The second category is the needy [person] (*miskīn*, pl. *masākīn*). A person is considered needy (*miskīn*) when what he earns does not cover what he needs to spend to survive. Someone may possess one thousand dirhams and still be *miskīn*, while another may own only an axe and a rope and yet be called wealthy. Neither the tiny house in which he lives, nor the clothes with which he covers his nakedness, nor the basic things in his house needed for life remove him from being among the needy (*masākīn*). Moreover, [even if he] owns books of *fiqh*, the *zakāt* on breaking the fast of *Ramādān* is still not incumbent on him. The ruling in respect to books is the same as [it is] in respect to clothing and household essentials, for he is in need of all of them. But let him understand that books may be for one of three purposes: for teaching knowledge to others, for personal benefit, and simply for the enjoyment of reading.

[Of these three,] the need for enjoyment is not considered a reason not to sell the books [in case of need].⁴ Thus, books such as collections of poetry, historical narratives, and the like, which serve only as enjoyment and comfort in this life but have no use in the hereafter, may be sold in order to pay expiation [for fasting that was missed] or to pay the *zakāt* due at the end of the fast of *Ramādān*. Someone who possesses such books is not called needy (*masākīn*).

As for books that are owned for the purpose of earning a living as a tutor for children, a teacher in a school, or an instructor [in any other situation], all of whom receive compensation, the books are his tools and not to be sold to pay the *zakāt* at the breaking of the fast of *Ramādān*. Rather, they are considered like the tools of a tailor or any other artisan.

And if the books are for teaching [religious knowledge] in fulfillment of the communal obligation⁵ [to teach religious knowledge], they are not to be sold, nor does their possession mean that

⁴ That is, in case of need, he should sell books that are only for his enjoyment of reading.

⁵ See 23 n.7 above.

the person who owns them is not called needy (*masākīn*), for they are used to fulfill an important need.

As for the books someone owns for the purpose of deriving personal benefit, such as a book of medicine in order to cure an illness, or a book of preaching in order to find admonitions in it, if there is a physician or a preacher in the land where he lives, then that dispenses with [his] need [for such books], and if [there is] not, then he needs them. It may also be that he only needs to study such books for a certain period of time. If this is the case, the best thing is to ask [himself how often he needs them, and] if he finds no need for them for a whole year, then he can do without them. Similarly, if someone has food left over from his daily need, then he would be liable to the *zakāt* at the breaking of the fast, and if we have reckoned food in terms of a daily need, we should reckon household items and clothing in terms of a year. So the clothes used in summer should not be sold in winter, nor vice versa. In this respect, books are like clothes and furnishings.

A person may have two copies of the same book and need only one. If he then says, "One of them is more correct but the other is a better copy! So I need both," we would say, "Be content with the more correct of the two, sell the better copy, and stay clear of luxury and indulgence."

And if he has two copies of a book on the same area of religious science, and one of them is simplified while the other is extensive, [and] if the books are for his own use, he should retain the more extensive of them, but if they are for teaching, then he should keep both, since one may have benefits not found in the other.

There are countless examples like these, which are not dealt with in *fiqh*. We wished to mention them here because of the general tribulations [of our time] and also as a way of showing the merit of this point of view as compared to others. In fact, it is impossible to study these kinds of examples in depth, since that would necessitate such things as looking into the furnishings of a house, their extent, number, and type, and into [someone's] personal clothing, and how roomy or narrow the house itself is.⁶ Such things are endless; but a

⁶ This sort of intrusion of an individual's privacy is not allowed in Islam; if a person's privacy is violated while gathering evidence, that evidence is not admissible.

jurist (*faqīh*) can still try to approach some general categories based on the understanding [he has been granted] and avoid the dangers of legal uncertainties (*shubuhāt*). A scrupulous person will follow what is clear and leave what causes him doubt for what does not cause him doubt.⁷ Indeed, the degrees between the two opposite poles, [that is, between] that which is clearly [lawful] and that which is clearly [prohibited], are many and complex, and none will be delivered safely [from error regarding them] except by [practicing] extreme caution. And God knows best.

[3]

The third category is workers (*‘āmilūn*) which in this case means anyone who helps in the collection of *zakāt*: the local officials, the secretary, the accountant, the treasurer, and the one who transports it, but not the caliph and not the district judge. No one of these workers should be paid more than any other. If there should be something left over from the eighth [that has been set aside for this payment], then it should be added to the portions for the other groups [of recipients], but if the amount is too little, then it should be completed by other wealth in the treasury.

[4]

The fourth category is those whose hearts have been turned toward Islam. This means the tribal leaders who have embraced Islam and who are obeyed by their people. By receiving a portion of the *zakāt*, these leaders and others like them—and their followers—are encouraged and attracted [to Islam].

⁷ This paraphrases a *ḥadīth* in al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2518, and elsewhere, in which Hasan is quoted as having said, “I remembered this advice from the Messenger of God ﷺ: ‘Leave what causes you doubt for what does not cause you doubt.’”

[5]

The fifth category is for the manumission of slaves. The portion used to buy their freedom is paid to the one who owns them. It is also permissible for someone to give *zakāt* to a slave so that he may buy his own freedom. The master of that slave, however, may not give him *zakāt* since he would still be [at the moment of receiving it] a slave.

[6]

The sixth category is debtors (*ghārimūn*). A debtor is a poor person who borrowed money for something that is in accordance with obedience to God or is permissible [by law]. If he borrowed money for something unlawful, however, he should not be given *zakāt* unless he repents. And if he is a wealthy man, *zakāt* should not be used to reduce his debt unless he incurred it for the general welfare [of others] or to quell violence and disorder.

[7]

The seventh category is that of warriors (*ghuzā*) who are not conscripted. Even if they have their own wealth, [a portion of] the *zakāt* may be used to aid them in battle.

[8]

The eighth category is the wayfarer (*ibn al-sabīl*). This is a person who set out from his own land or is a stranger passing through another land for a purpose that is not sinful. If he is poor or has some wealth but it is in another land, he may be given help [from *zakāt*] to the degree of his [immediate] need.

If someone asks, "How should these attributes be known?" We would say that in respect to the destitute (*faqīr*) or the needy (*miskīn*) person, it is by their word alone. Neither should be asked to produce any proof, nor swear an oath. Rather, it is permitted to rely only the person's word, unless he is known to be a liar. In respect to combat or travel, these are matters of the future. If someone says, "I am setting forth as a soldier," he can be given aid, but if, subsequently, he does not go, the aid must be returned. In respect to the remaining categories, however, a claimant must produce proof.

Such are the conditions for receiving *zakāt*; as for the question of how much should be given to each [category], that is yet to be discussed.

On the Duties of the One Who Receives *Zakāt*

These number five.

[1]

The first duty is that he should know that God عزَّ وجلَّ has ordered that *zakāt* be given to him in order to lift the burden of his cares from him and render all his cares into a single care.⁸

For God has ordained worship and service on His creatures in order that their cares in life might be one single care: [namely,] God, glory be to Him, and the last day, and this is the meaning of His words, *And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me* [51:56].

But even as divine wisdom necessitates that a servant be subject to his desires and needs, and that because of this his concerns are dispersed [in many directions, so also], divine generosity necessitates that material blessings should rain down on him to suffice these needs.

⁸ This paraphrases the *ḥadīth*, "Whoever makes all his cares into a single care, God will suffice him in those cares." Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 5:123; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 257; al-Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-īmān*, 3:312.

God thus causes wealth to increase and places it in the hands of His servants, [so] that it might be a tool to provide for their needs and a means by which they might be made free for worship and devotion. There are some whose wealth is so great that it becomes a source of trial and tribulation and [this] exposes them to great danger, and there are others whom He loves and protects from the world just as a caring person would protect an ailing brother. And so He keeps excessive wealth and possessions from them and directs to them what they need through the hands of the wealthy. Thus, the labor of earning money and the toil involved in collecting and keeping it falls on the wealthy, while its benefit goes to the poor. As a result, the poor are relieved [and able to] worship God and prepare for what follows death. Worldly luxuries do not turn them away from their worship, nor does need preoccupy them from their preparation, and this is the ultimate blessing to have [in this world]. The poor man should know the value of this blessing and realize that God's grace, in what He has kept away from him, is greater than in what He has given him. This is further explained in the book on poverty,⁹ God most high willing.

So let the recipient take what is given to him by God, glory be to Him, as provision and as a means of helping him obey God, and let his intention in receiving it be only to strengthen himself for his devotions to God most high, and if he is unable to do that, then let him spend it on what God most high has made permissible to him. But if he uses [that blessing] as a means of sinning against God عزَّ وجلَّ, then he becomes someone who denies God's grace, and [he] merits from God most high only distance and anger.

[2]

The second duty is that he express thanks to the giver, pray for him, and speak well of him.

Let his thanks and prayers be such that they do not [exalt] the giver beyond his [role] as just an intermediary, and only the means

⁹ *On Poverty and Abstinence*, book 34 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

by which the blessing of God, glory be to Him, reaches the recipient [At the same time], that path itself has a right because it is God who made him a means and a path. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ said, "He who does not thank people does not thank God."¹⁰ And God most high praises His servants in several places [in the Qur'an] for their deeds—as in His words, *An excellent servant, indeed he was one repeatedly turning back [to God]* [38:30, 38:44]—even while He is the one who created those deeds and also created their ability to accomplish them.

And let the recipient say in his supplication, "May God cleanse your heart among the hearts of the righteous, and purify your deeds among the deeds of the chosen, and bless your spirit among the spirits of the martyrs,"¹¹ for the Prophet ﷺ said, "Anyone who does you a favor, do the same in return, but if you cannot, then supplicate [to God] for him until you know that you have done him good in return."¹²

Part of complete gratitude is to conceal any flaws in what is given. If there is some flaw, let him not demean the gift, nor find fault with it, nor blame the giver for not giving something else to him. Rather, he should make much of the gift to himself and before people, for just as it is the duty of the giver to make little of what he gives, it is the duty of the recipient to accept it graciously and dignify it. So let each servant fulfill his duty and know that in this there is no contradiction, since to make little of the gift on one hand and dignify it on the other offsets [the other action]. It is important for the giver to understand the reason he should make little of what he is giving and that to do the opposite, for him, would be harmful, and [it is important] for the recipient to understand his role as well.

All this does not, in any way, negate the necessity of seeing that the gift is from God عز وجل. He who does not see an intermediary as [only] an intermediary is ignorant. In fact, seeing the intermediary as the true source is reprehensible.

¹⁰ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4811; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 1954.

¹¹ Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:109.

¹² Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1672; al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 5:82.

[3]

The third duty of the one who receives charity is to consider what he is taking.

If he sees that it is not lawful, then he should abstain from it: *And for whoever fears God—He will make for him a way out and will provide for him from [some] where he does not expect* [65:2–3]. He who abstains from what is forbidden will not be deprived of an opening toward what is lawful.¹³ Thus, [for example], he will not take from the wealth of the Turks and the army [that serves them], nor from the agents of the rulers, since most of their wealth is unlawful.¹⁴ If, however, someone is in extreme difficulty and does not know whether the wealth being offered to him is from a specific owner, then he may take from it to the measure of his need. For the legal ruling in such a case is that it be given in charity, as will be explained in the book on the *Lawful and the Unlawful*.¹⁵ He who is unable to obtain what is lawful and takes something [that may be prohibited] is not taking *zakāt*, since there can be no *zakāt* paid on something which is, itself, unlawful.

[4]

The fourth duty: [A recipient of *zakāt*] should avoid anything doubtful and unclear concerning the amount of what he takes and [he] should take nothing except the amount allowed him, and he should not take it unless he has ascertained that it is his rightful due.

If, for example, he is receiving *zakāt* to purchase the freedom of a slave, or to remove the burden of a debt, then he should take what is equal to that and nothing more. If he has a right to *zakāt*

¹³ That is, he will be given an opening to what is lawful.

¹⁴ Al-Ghazālī lived during the time of the Saljūqs; at that time, some of the army were known to appropriate lands unlawfully. For this reason, al-Ghazālī advises against taking monies from them, given that these funds might have been gained unlawfully.

¹⁵ *The Lawful and the Unlawful*, book 14 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

because he works as a collector of it, he should not take beyond what is due to a collector, and even if he is offered more than that he should refuse. For the wealth is not for the giver to do with as he pleases. Again, if the recipient is a traveler, he should not take what is beyond his need, for his daily provision and to rent a mount for the time it takes him to reach his destination. If he is a warrior, he should not take anything beyond what he needs for the battle itself: a horse, armor, and currency [for daily provision]. The amount itself is determined according to the case and there is not a specific limit; this applies to a traveler as well. The scrupulous person is one who leaves what causes him doubt for what does not cause him doubt.¹⁶

If he accepts charity on the basis of poverty, let him first look at the furnishings in his house, his clothes, and his books to see whether there might be something he could do without or replace with something cheaper, so that if he sold it and bought something less expensive, he could use the extra money for his needs. All this entails making an effort [to see the truth]. There is a clear condition that confirms whether a needy person is deserving and another that confirms its opposite, that he is not [needy]. But between these two are many degrees of uncertainty, and he who "grazes [his sheep] near the border of a private domain is bound to have them wander into it."¹⁷ In this, one can only take the word of the recipient at face value.

In determining how much the needy require, there are countless levels between rigor and ease. While a scrupulous person tends toward strictness, someone who takes his religion lightly decides that he needs every manner of thing. This latter attitude, however, is abhorred by the law.

When the amount of his need is confirmed, he should not take a lot of wealth but only what will suffice him for one year. That is the maximum permitted, for when the year begins anew, the means of [his] income [from *zakāt*] also begins anew. Moreover, the Messenger of God ﷺ used to stock a year's worth of provisions for his family. This is as close as we can come to defining [this issue] for the poor and the needy, but if he limits himself to the needs of one month or even a single day, it would be more pious.

16 This paraphrases a *ḥadīth* already noted above.

17 He is paraphrasing a well-known *ḥadīth* in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīh*, and elsewhere.

The positions of the learned concerning how much *zakāt* or charity a poor man is allowed vary. There are some who hold the extreme view of limiting it to the nourishment required to sustain a person for one day and night, following what was related by Sahl b. al-Hanzaliyya, who said, "The Prophet ﷺ once prohibited a person from begging on the grounds that he was rich. On being asked what constituted that wealth, he replied, 'He has enough for one meal [for] one day and one meal [for] one night.'"¹⁸

Others have said that a person may receive charity up to the amount that would define him as a wealthy person and this, [they hold], is defined as the minimum amount on which he himself would have to pay *zakāt*, for God most high made *zakāt* a duty of the wealthy. So they say that he may receive for himself and for each member of his family up to the amount on which *zakāt* would be payable.

Others have said that the definition of being wealthy is to possess fifty dirhams worth of silver or its value in gold, based on the narration of Ibn Mas'ūd, [who said] that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Someone who begs and yet has enough wealth to suffice his needs will come to the day of judgment with scratches on his face." And when he was asked, "How much is enough?" he replied, "Fifty dirhams or its value in gold." It has been said, however, that one of those who transmitted this *ḥadīth* was not reliable.¹⁹

Still others hold that the amount is forty dirhams, based on a *ḥadīth* narrated by 'Atā' b. Yasār (*munqaṭī*)²⁰ that the Prophet ﷺ said, "He who begs while in possession of an ounce [of gold] is begging importunately (*alḥāfa*)."²¹

18 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1629.

19 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1626; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 650; al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 5:97; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1840.

20 *Munqaṭī* refers to a *ḥadīth* that has a single link missing in the chain of transmission. See M. M. Azami, *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature*, 44. In this case, 'Atā' b. Yasār, a Follower, did not mention the Companion by name (he said 'a Companion from Banī Asad'). According to *ḥadīth* scholars, narrations are acceptable from Companions even if they are not mentioned by name; therefore, this narration is not missing a link in the chain (ed.).

21 Referring to the verse *They do not ask people persistently [or at all] (ilḥāfan)* [2:273].

Others have exaggerated the aspect of liberality and held that a poor man should receive enough to buy a piece of land or goods to trade, from which he may live for the rest of his life, for this is what defines being wealthy, and 'Umar رضي الله عنه said, "When you give, give enough to enrich [the recipient]." Based on this, there are people who hold that if a person [had been wealthy] and was reduced to poverty, he has the right to receive enough to restore him to his former state, even if it were ten thousand dirhams. The exception to this would be someone who goes beyond the limits of moderation.

When Abū Talḥa became distracted in his prayer by his garden and he said to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, "I have given it in charity," he replied, "Give it instead to your relatives. That will be better for you."²² And so he gave it to Ḥassān and Abū Qatāda. To give an entire palm grove to two people made them abundantly wealthy. 'Umar رضي الله عنه gave a Bedouin a female camel and its parents.²³ These are [two] examples of what has been conveyed about liberality in giving.

As for examples of limiting the amount [of charity] to what would nourish someone for one day, or to an ounce of gold, these have been conveyed in relation to what is disapproved of in begging and frequenting people's doors [to ask for food], and so they actually concern a different point of law. The permissibility of buying someone a piece of land by which he may become self-sufficient is a more probable situation, although it also tends toward excess.

[The act] closest to the middle way is [to give] someone what would suffice him for one year. Going beyond that contains dangers; falling short of it contains hardship.

In all such matters, unless there is a definite ruling in the law that establishes the limits, the best someone qualified to interpret the law (*mujtahid*) can do is decide based on the situation and say to the one trying to be scrupulous what the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Consult your heart, and [do] what it advises you."²⁴ For "sin is

²² The first half of this is found in Mālik, *al-Muwatta'*, 1:98, and the rest in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1461, and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 998. This incident is recounted in al-Ghazālī, *The Mysteries of the Prayer*, 54–55.

²³ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 44:316.

²⁴ Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 4:228. Note that in this *ḥadīth*, the heart refers to one's conscience, or the scrupulous voice within, not to one's desires. That is, 'consult your heart, and after you seek advice and even if that advice allows for an easier

what grates on the heart."²⁵ So if the recipient finds in his heart that something bothers him about what he is receiving, let him fear God and not try to justify what he is doing or find a ruling from one of the scholars of exoteric knowledge. Their rulings are limited and are intricately connected to certain conditions of necessity. They also contain a certain amount of speculation and ambiguity, and avoiding things that are doubtful is one of the marks of the people of *dīn* and the practices of the wayfarers on the path of the hereafter.

[5]

The fifth duty is for the recipient to ask the giver how much he [the giver] is required to give. If the giver offers him an amount that exceeds one-eighth of the entire amount due him [the recipient], then the recipient should not take it, for along with others who share his claim, he is not entitled to more than one-eighth. So, he should take from that eighth a portion equal to that of the two other members of his group. This questioning is obligatory for most people because they do not observe this division²⁶ either out of neglect or because they take license. It is permissible, however, to omit these sorts of questions in cases in which someone is convinced that the situation will not lead to a forbidden act.²⁷ The situations in which one should ask and the degrees of likelihood concerning what is forbidden will be discussed in the book of the *Lawful and the Unlawful*,²⁸ God most high willing.

less scrupulous, path, follow your heart.'

²⁵ A saying generally attributed to Ibn Mas'ūd, but sometimes referred to as a *ḥadīth*, and found in Abū Dāwūd, *al-Zuhd*, 125; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, 8748; and elsewhere.

²⁶ As mentioned above, al-Ghazālī followed the Shāfi'ī view that *zakāt* must be divided among the eight categories of recipients mentioned in 9:60, and that each eighth should be divided among at least three recipients who belong to that category.

²⁷ That is, if you think it is permissible, you do not have to ask.

²⁸ *The Lawful and the Unlawful*, book 14 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

On Voluntary Charity, Its Virtues, and the Manners Related to Receiving It and Giving It

On the Virtues of Charity

AMONG the *ḥadīth* [are the following]:

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Give in charity, though it be only a single date, for it satisfies the hungry and extinguishes sins just as water extinguishes fire."¹

And he said ﷺ, "Beware of the fire, if only [by giving] half a date [in charity] and if you lack even that, then by a kind word."²

And also,

There is no Muslim servant of God who gives in charity [even] a date that he has earned in a pure and lawful way—for God accepts only what is pure—except that God will take it in His right hand and raise it up as one of you would lift up a baby camel or a colt, until it becomes as great as Mount Uhud [in recompense].³

¹ Ibn al-Mubārak, *Zuhd*, 651.

² Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1413; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1016.

³ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1014.

And he said ﷺ to Abū l-Dardā', "If you prepare a stew, add plenty of water, then see those whose homes neighbor yours and invite them to share it."⁴

And also, "There is no servant of God who is generous in giving charity except that God عز وجل will be generous to his heirs in what he leaves them."⁵

And also, "[On the day of judgment] each person will stand in the shade of his charity until God completes the reckoning for all."⁶

And also, "Charity closes seventy gates of evil."⁷

And again, "Charity is a mystery that extinguishes the wrath of God عز وجل."⁸

And also, "The one who gives from his wealth does not have a reward more excellent than the one who accepts [it] out of need."⁹ It may be that what is meant here is someone who accepts charity in order to stave off his needs and so better devote himself to his *dīn*. In that case, he would be equal to the one who gives charity for the sake of his *dīn*.

And the Messenger of God ﷺ was once asked, "Which charity is best?" to which he replied, "It is what you give while you are still in good health, avid for what you have, and fearing want—not what you ignore until the moment your spirit has reached your throat [on your deathbed] and then say, 'To this person, give this, and to that one, give that' and it was already theirs."¹⁰

And the Prophet ﷺ also said to his Companions ﷺ, "Give in charity!" A man among them said, "I have one dinar," and the Prophet ﷺ said, "Spend it on yourself." Then he said, "I have another," and the Prophet ﷺ said, "Spend it on your wife." The man said, "I have another," and the Prophet ﷺ said, "Spend it on your child." Again, the man said, "I have another," and the Prophet ﷺ said, "Spend it on your servant." Finally,

⁴ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2625.

⁵ Ibn al-Mubārak, *Zuhd*, 646.

⁶ Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3310; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 8:245.

⁷ Al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, 4:274.

⁸ Al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, 8:261.

⁹ Al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-awsaṭ*, 8231; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 8:245.

¹⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1419; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1032.

when the man said, "I have yet another," the Prophet ﷺ said, "You can see best what to do with it!"¹¹

And he said ﷺ, "Charity is not lawful for the family of Muḥammad, for it is the impurities of human beings."¹²

And he said ﷺ, "Respond to a beggar's disgrace if only by a morsel of food no bigger than a bird's head."¹³

And also ﷺ, "If a beggar is honest [about his need], no one who turns him away will prosper."¹⁴

And Jesus عليه السلام said, "If someone turns a beggar away from his house with nothing, the angels will not enter that house for seven days."

There were two tasks our Prophet ﷺ would not entrust to another: He would get his own water for ablution at night and cover it, and he would give charity to the poor with his own hand.¹⁵

And he said ﷺ, "The needy person is not the one you respond to with a date or two or a morsel of food or two. The needy person is the one who is too shy to beg. Read, if you will, [the words of God], *They do not ask people persistently [or at all]* [2:273].¹⁶

And he also said ﷺ, "There is no Muslim who clothes a fellow Muslim except that he will stay in God's protection as long as a shred of that garment remains."¹⁷

And from the sayings [of the saintly]:

ʿUrwah b. Zubayr said, "ʿĀ'isha رضي الله عنها gave fifty-thousand dirhams in charity and yet she wore a patched headscarf."¹⁸

11 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1691; al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, 5:62; Ibn Hibbān, *Sahih*, 3337; al-Ḥakīm al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:415.

12 Muslim, *Sahih*, 1072. "The impurities [lit., 'filth'] of human beings" (*awsāḥk al-nās*) is said to mean the sins that are removed when one gives in charity. Al-Zabidi, *Ithāf*, 4:170.

13 Al-ʿUqaylī, *al-Duʿafāʾ*, 1:121. *Madhamma*, translated here as "disgrace" may also mean "shame," or "fault." In most cases, begging is considered a disgraceful thing for a person to have to do.

14 Al-Tabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 8:246; al-Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab al-imān*, 3126.

15 Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 362.

16 Al-Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 4539; Muslim, *Sahih*, 1039.

17 Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2484 with similar words; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1682, with the same meaning.

18 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Zuhd*, 754.

And commenting on the words of God عز وجل *And they give food for the love of God to the needy, the orphan, and the captive* [76:8]. Mujaḥid said, "Even while they themselves crave it."¹⁹

And ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه said, "O God, grant Your bounty to those of us who are generous that they might pass it on to those of us in need."

And ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿUmayr, "The prayer brings you halfway down the path, fasting brings you to the gates of the King, and charity puts you in His presence."²⁰

Ibn Abī l-Jaʿd said, "Charity closes seventy gates of evil, giving it in secret is seventy times better than in public, and it breaks the jaws of seventy devils."²¹

Ibn Masʿūd said, "There was a man who worshiped God for seventy years and then committed fornication, and all his practice was annulled. Then he passed by a poor man and gave him a loaf of bread, whereupon God forgave him his sin and restored to him the seventy years of worship."²²

And Luqmān said to his son, "When you commit a transgression, give in charity."²³

Yahyā b. Muʿadh said, "I know of no seed that weighs as much as all the mountains of this world except the seed of charity."²⁴

ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abī Rawwād said, "It used to be said that there were three things among the treasures of heaven: Being silent about one's illness, [being] silent about one's charity, and [being] silent about hardships." This is also related as a *ḥadīth*.²⁵

ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه said, "A person's good works vie with one another, and charity says, 'I am the best of you!'"

19 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsir*, 23:543.

20 Al-Dinawarī, *al-Majālis wa-jawāhir al-ʿilm*, 440; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 36:333.

21 The first part of this is found in al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 4:274, and the last part appears in Ibn al-Mubārak, *Zuhd*, 649.

22 Ḥusayn b. Ḥarb al-Marūzī, *al-Birr wa-l-ṣila*, 279; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 35353; Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, 1:263.

23 Ḥusayn b. Ḥarb al-Marūzī, *al-Birr wa-l-ṣila*, 281.

24 Al-Thaʿlabī, *Tafsir*, 2:284.

25 Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, 7:117.

‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar was wont to give a very sweet variety of fresh date in charity and said, “I heard God’s words, *Never will you attain the good [reward] until you spend [in the way of God] from that which you love* [3:92], and God knows that I really love this kind of date!”²⁶

Al-Nakha‘ī said, “If something is for God *عَزَّوَجَلَّ*, it displeases me that it should have any flaws.”

‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr said,

People will be gathered on the day of judgment as hungry as they had ever been, as thirsty as they had ever been, and as naked as they had ever been. Then those who gave the hungry food to eat for the sake of God *عَزَّوَجَلَّ*, God will sate [them], and those who gave the thirsty to drink for the sake of God *عَزَّوَجَلَّ*, God will quench their thirst, and those who clothed the naked for the sake of God *عَزَّوَجَلَّ*, God will clothe [them].²⁷

Hasan [al-Baṣrī] said, “If God had so willed, He could have made you all wealthy with not a single poor man among you, but He tests some of you by way of others.”²⁸

And al-Sha‘bī said, “Someone who gives charity should see himself as more in need of God’s recompense than a poor man in need of that charity. If he does not see this, then his act of charity is in vain and it will strike him in the face.”

And Mālik said, “We see nothing wrong with a wealthy man’s drinking some of the water he gives in charity and distributes in the mosque, because it is for all who are thirsty and not just the indigent and poor.”

And it is said that a slave trader once passed by Hasan [al-Baṣrī] with a bondwoman to sell. Hasan asked, “Would you accept a dirham or two as her price?” When the trader said no, Hasan told him, “Then go! For God Himself accepts even some coins and a morsel of food in exchange for one of the *hūrī* of paradise!”²⁹

26 Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 2:262.

27 Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Zuhd*, 1092.

28 Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, 35471.

29 Al-Ābī, *Nathr al-durr*, 5:183–184.

On Giving Charity Privately and Publicly

In regard to this question, people have disagreed about which way is more sincere. Some tend toward [the view] that giving in secret is best, others that giving in public is best. We would like to explain the reasons for each [view] as well as its pitfalls, and then discover the truth in each.

There are five reasons to keep charity private.

[1]

First [reason]: It is better to conceal the recipient. If someone is given charity in public, it disgraces his dignity, reveals his neediness, and removes his self-restraint and respectability, which is a virtue [that God praises in His words,] *An ignorant [person] would think them self-sufficient because of their restraint* [2:273].

[2]

Second [reason]: It is safer for the hearts and tongues of people who might become envious and reproachful of the recipient, and even suspect that he received it without being truly in need or might have taken more than he needed. Envy, suspicion, and backbiting are major sins, and it is extremely important to help people stay clear of them.

Thus, Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī said, “I avoid putting on new clothes out of fear that it might create envy in my neighbors.”³⁰

And a certain ascetic said, “Perhaps I refrained from using something so that my brothers would not ask, ‘Where did he get that?’”³¹

30 Abū Ṭālib al-Makki, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:201.

31 Waki‘, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 3:35.

It has been related that Ibrāhīm al-Taymī was seen wearing a new shirt and some of his brothers asked, "Where did you get that?" He answered, "My brother Khaythama gave it to me to wear, and had I known that his family knew of it, I would never have accepted it."³²

[3]

Third [reason]: It helps the giver keep his deed secret, for giving charity privately has much more merit than [giving] publicly and helping anyone accomplish a gesture of goodness is, in itself, a gesture of goodness. But keeping something secret requires silence from both [the giver and the recipient]. If [the recipient] speaks of it, the giver is also made public.

Once a certain man offered [charity] to a scholar in public and he refused to take it, but when another man offered it to him in private, he accepted it. When he was asked about this, he explained, "This one acted with courtesy by concealing [what he gave], while that one acted rudely, and so I refused his charity."³³

A man once gave one of the Sufis [some charity] in a public gathering and he refused it, upon which the man asked him, "Why do you refuse what God عز وجل is giving you?" The Sufi answered, "You have associated others with God, glory be to Him, in what belongs to God most high alone, for you were not satisfied that your deed should be for the eyes of God alone. So I returned to you your sin of association."³⁴

A certain gnostic once accepted in private what he had turned down in public. When the giver asked him about that, he answered, "You sinned against God by giving in public, and I was not going to help you in your sin. Then you obeyed God by giving it in private, and I helped you to accomplish the good."³⁵

³² Hannād, *al-Zuhd*, 659; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 4:113; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhib al-kamāl*, 8:372. In the latter two works, the narration concerns Ibrāhīm al-Nakhi, not al-Taymī.

³³ Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:202.

³⁴ Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:202.

³⁵ Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:202.

[Sufyān] al-Thawrī said, "If I knew that among you there was someone who would not mention his charity nor speak about it to people, I would accept it."³⁶

[4]

Fourth [reason]: Accepting charity publicly is humiliating and abasing, and "a believer should not abase himself."³⁷

Thus, one of the scholars would accept charity in private, but not in public, and say, "To receive charity in public demeans the knowledge [I teach] and debases the one who bears that knowledge [by making it into a commodity], and I cannot be a part of anything that exalts something mundane by demeaning knowledge and humiliating its bearers."

[5]

Fifth [reason]: [Giving in private] avoids the possibility of having to share [the charity with those present], for the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "If someone is given a gift in the presence of others, the others share in it."³⁸ Even if what is given is silver or gold, it does not cease to be a gift, for the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم also said, "The best thing a man can give to his brother as a gift is silver, or else give him bread to eat," which makes silver [an acceptable] gift. Thus, it is disapproved of to single out a person in a gathering and give something to him alone unless all those present accept the gesture. Even then, it is not completely free from doubt, whereas to give individually in private is [free from doubt].

³⁶ Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:202.

³⁷ This paraphrases the *hadith*: "A believer should not abase himself," which appears in the collection of al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2254; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 4016; and Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:202.

³⁸ Al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-awsat*, 2471; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 3:351.

[On Giving Charity Publicly]

As for giving in public and mentioning it, there are four reasons to do this.

[1]

The first [reason] is to encourage sincerity, honesty, and freedom from affectation and ostentation [in the recipient].

[2]

The second [reason] is to help [a recipient] rid himself of the love of rank and position, show others servanthood and neediness, relinquish the pride and the pretension of self-sufficiency, and be indifferent about how one appears in the eyes of others.

A certain gnostic once said to one of his students, "Make charity known if you are the one who has received it, for you will always find one of two men [around you]. For one of these two, the esteem he has for you in his heart will be lost, and that is a desired goal, since it is safer for your *dīn* and [involves] fewer pitfalls for your ego. For the other man, the esteem he has for you in his heart will increase because you showed him your honesty, and that is what your brother should desire, for his reward [with God] will increase because his love and esteem for you has grown. And in this, you too will be rewarded, for you were the means by which his reward increased."³⁹

[3]

The third [reason] is that a gnostic beholds only God ﷻ. For him, the [giving in] secret and [giving in the] open in all things are one

39 Abū Ṭalīb al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:202.

and the same, and if his state differs [according to one situation or another] then [that] would be [a form of] association (*shirk*) in his [realization of God's] unity (*tawhīd*). Thus, one of them said, "We have no regard for the supplication of someone who accepts charity in private but rejects it in public."⁴⁰

[Excessive] concern about what people think, whether they [are] present or absent, is a shortcoming. Instead, our regard should be focused on God, the One and Only. It is related that a spiritual teacher greatly favored one of his disciples and this bothered the others. To show them that disciple's particular merit, he gave each of them a bird and told them to take it to an isolated place where no one could see him and slaughter it. Each of them then went off by himself and slaughtered his bird, except that one disciple, who brought his [bird] back alive. When the teacher asked them what they had done, they said, "We did what our teacher told us to do."

Then he asked that particular disciple, "What happened? Why did you not slaughter your bird as your companions did?"

The disciple replied, "I could not find a place where no one could see me, because God sees me wherever I am."

"This is why I favor him," said the teacher. "His mind is turned toward no one but God ﷻ."⁴¹

[4]

The fourth [reason] is that giving charity in public is in keeping with the prescribed form (*sunna*) of expressing gratitude, for God most high has said, *But as for the favor of your Lord, report [it]* [93:11]. Concealing that bounty is a denial of it. Moreover, God ﷻ reproaches those who conceal what He ﷻ has given them and associates it with the vice of avarice, [according to] His words, [God does not love the arrogant and proud], who are stingy and enjoin upon [other] people stinginess and conceal what God has given them of His bounty [4:37].

40 Abū Ṭalīb al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:202.

41 Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 334.

About this question, the Prophet ﷺ said, "When God bestows His bounty on a servant, He loves it to be visible on him."⁴²

A man once gave a certain saintly person something privately and the latter held it up [for all to see,] saying, "This is from this world, and in this world, it is best to show things publicly. But as for the matters of the hereafter, concealment is best." One of them [even] said, "If you are given something in a gathering, take it, but then return it later in private."

Expressing gratitude [publicly] is strongly encouraged, even as the Prophet ﷺ said, "He who is not grateful to people is not grateful to God عز وجل."⁴³ Expressing gratitude also takes the place of doing something good in return, according to his words ﷺ, "If someone does something good for you, do something good for him in return, and if you are not able to, then praise him for his goodness and pray for him until you know that you have done something good for him in return."⁴⁴

When the Emigrants⁴⁵ once said, concerning gratitude, "O Messenger of God, we have never seen goodness from a people in whose house we stayed and whose wealth we shared without being afraid that they would receive all the reward," the Prophet ﷺ replied, "The thanks and praise you gave them were your way of doing good for them in return."⁴⁶

So now that you are familiar with these reasons [to give either in private or public], know that the differences people have about them are not substantial, but rather differences of state.

[These examples] should clearly show that we cannot rule that [doing good] in private is always best or [doing good] in public always best, but rather that the issues vary according to different intentions, and that intentions vary according to different states and personalities. Thus, a sincere person should watch over his own soul, lest he be led along by delusion or taken in by self-deception

⁴² Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 3:473, and with similar wording in al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, 2006.

⁴³ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 4811; al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, 1953.

⁴⁴ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1672; al-Nasā'i, *Sunan*, 5:82.

⁴⁵ Lit., *muhājirūn*; this is a reference to the early Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medina with Muḥammad on 12 Rabi' al-Awwal 1/4 September 622.

⁴⁶ Al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, 2487.

or by the ruses of Satan. And although deception and trickery may be less a danger in acts done secretly than in [those done] openly, both [acts] are susceptible [to them, that is, deception and trickery].

Deception finds its way into [charity given in] private because human nature tends to want to preserve personal honor and status, to avoid appearing contemptuous before men, or being seen as lowly while the giver is seen as a virtuous benefactor. This is a nearly incurable disease that takes control of the ego, and by which Satan magnifies the positive aspects of keeping charity private and convinces him that the reason he is doing so belongs to one of the five we have mentioned.

For all of these there is a criterion and touchstone [by which to distinguish between deception and sincerity]; and this [involves] asking oneself the question: "Is the pain I would feel at the disclosure that I myself take charity equal to the pain I would feel at the disclosure that one of my peers takes it?" If someone sincerely wants to help people avoid calumny, envy, and suspicion, or to guard against rending the veil of honor, or to help a benefactor remain anonymous, or to preserve knowledge [and the learned] from abuse, then [he must know that] all of that also applies to the disclosure that his brother receives charity. And if the disclosure that he himself receives charity would weigh heavier on him than the disclosure that one of his peers does the same thing, then for him to ascribe his motives to those [nobler reasons] is simply erroneous and false, and comes from the mischief and deceptiveness of Satan.

To dishonor knowledge [and the learned] is abhorrent because it is knowledge, not because it is any particular person's knowledge, and calumny is abhorrent because it destroys reputations, not because it destroys any particular person's reputation.

It may be that the person who is truly aware of these distinctions is too powerful for Satan [to deceive in this question], but for the person who is not [aware], there will much practice but little result.

In contrast, human nature tends toward [giving charity] in public because it appeals to the heart of the giver and encourages to him to do the same again. It also shows that the recipient is articulate in expressing his thanks, and this impels people to respect him and seek him out [in order to give him more charity]. So this, too,

can be a nearly fatal disease inwardly. In truth, Satan has no power over a religious person at all, unless [Satan] can deceive him [the religious person] into thinking that such artifice is actually respect for the *sunna*. [Satan] will say to him, "Giving thanks is part of the *sunna* and keeping it hidden is just pretension!" and [Satan] will show him all the reasons we have mentioned as a way of tricking him into [taking charity] in public. His inner purpose, however, is what we have just described.

In this case, the criterion and touchstone [on which a recipient might test his motives] is for him to see if he is as inclined to express gratitude if [he knows] that his expression of thanks will not be conveyed to the benefactor, or to anyone who might be a benefactor, or to those who want their charity kept totally secret. If these conditions are equal [for the recipient], then he should know that his motive is truly to uphold the *sunna* concerning gratitude and to mention [God's] blessings. If not, then he is deceiving himself. Then, if he knows that his real motive is to observe the *sunna* concerning gratitude, he should not neglect his duty toward the benefactor.

If the latter [the benefactor] is a person who loves to be thanked and loves for [his generosity to] be known, then it is better for the recipient to conceal his gratitude, for in doing so, he fulfills what is due to the benefactor by keeping him from falling into the error of [pride].

But if it is known from his state that [the benefactor] does not love expressions of thanks or seek them out, then [the recipient] should express his thanks and make the charity known. This is why, on one occasion, the Prophet ﷺ said of a man who praised someone in his presence, "You have just struck him on the neck! If he had heard that, he would never succeed!"⁴⁷ But on other occasions, he would praise people in public, as a way of giving them confidence. In those cases, he knew that praise would not harm them but rather [would] increase their aspiration and encourage them toward goodness. So about one [person], he said, "Here is the chief of the Bedouin!"⁴⁸ and of another, "When a nobleman

47 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2662; and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3000, without the ending "if he had heard..."

48 Al-Hākim al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:211. By calling him this, the Prophet ﷺ

from a people visits you, honor him!"⁴⁹ And once, when he heard the speech of a certain man, and it pleased him greatly, he said, "Truly, in eloquent speech there is a magic!"⁵⁰ And he also said, "If you know something good concerning your brother, tell him. For this will increase his desire to do good."⁵¹ And also, "If a believer is praised, faith is nurtured in his heart."⁵²

And al-Thawri said, "He who knows his own soul is not harmed by people's praise."⁵³

He also said to Yūsuf b. Asbāt, "When I can do something good for you, I am happier about it than you are because I see it as a blessing from God عز وجل upon me, and so I give thanks, and if I do not see it thus, I do not."⁵⁴

Anyone who is striving to watch over his heart must be aware of such details concerning his motives. Actions with the limbs of the body alone, devoid of any understanding of these inner subtleties, are something that make Satan laugh and are the object of his ridicule, since it brings [the believer] a lot of toil and very little benefit.

This is an example of the kind of knowledge about which it is said, "Learning even one point of this knowledge is better than a year of physical devotions," since it is through such knowledge that a life's worship is revived, just as it is through ignorance of such matters that a life's worship dies and amounts to nothing.

In sum, the best and safest course is to accept [charity] in public and reject it in private, and without excessive rhetoric, but rather with the complete knowledge that the secret and the open are equal, and that kind of knowledge is the red sulphur which is

was exalting the man's station.

49 Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 3712; al-Hākim al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, 4:291.

50 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 5146.

51 Al-Daraqutnī, *al-ʿIlal*, 7:170.

52 Al-Tabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 1:170; al-Hākim al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:597.

53 Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:203.

54 Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, 7:54; Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:341. In both of these references, the last phrase is *wa illā, fa lā*, literally, "And if not, not." In the text of the *Ihyāʾ*, however, the phrase reads, *wa illā, fa lā tashkur*, "And if not, do not give thanks." In the context, the version in the two earlier works (i.e., Abū Nuʿaym's *Hilya* and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb*) appears more comprehensible.

spoken of but not seen. We ask God, the infinitely generous, for His help and accord.

Is it Better to Accept Voluntary Charity (*Sadaqa*) or *Zakāt*?

Ibrāhīm al-Khawwās and Junayd, along with many others, held that it was better for someone to accept aid from voluntary charity, since to accept it from *zakāt* means leaving less for the destitute. Moreover, a needy person may not be able to totally justify why he merits *zakāt*, according to the description in the book of God most high [the Qurʾān], while voluntary charity is much more inclusive.

Others, however, say that to accept *zakāt* rather than voluntary charity is better, inasmuch as it helps to fulfill what is obligatory, and if all needy people ceased to accept *zakāt*, that would be a sin. [Another reason it is better, they say,] is that when someone accepts *zakāt*, there is no question of [the giver] obligating [the recipient] to do something in return for his generosity, for it is a right of God, glory be to Him, which He made obligatory as a means of providing for those of His servants who are in need. [They say it is also better] because *zakāt* is based on need, and a human being certainly knows his own need. Taking voluntary charity, on the other hand, depends [on how well a needy person observes his] *dīn*, because a benefactor generally only gives to someone he deems to be good. [Taking *zakāt* is also better, they say] because seeking the agreement of the poor [concerning who should receive it] is more conducive to humility and modesty [in the giver] and is further from pride, while a person who receives voluntary charity may do so simply as if it were a gift, without distinguishing [whether it is a gift or charity], for the latter entails humility and need.

The truest thing that can be said concerning this question is that it varies depending on an individual's state, what is predominant in his soul, and what is present in his intention. If he is uncertain whether his condition qualifies him [to receive *zakāt*], then he certainly should not take anything. But if he knows with certainty that he is deserving—if, for example, he has incurred a debt because of what he spent on a good cause—and has no other way to repay it,

then he is certainly deserving [of a portion of the *zakāt*]. Moreover, if this person is given a choice between accepting *zakāt* or [accepting voluntary] charity, and the benefactor wishes to give [voluntary] charity only to him [and to] no one else, then he should accept it. For *zakāt* is a religious obligation that must be given [in any case] to those who deserve it, and so [by accepting the voluntary charity instead], that recipient will add to the [common] good by leaving more in the *zakāt* for other needy people. If, on the other hand, the benefactor's wealth was designated for [voluntary] charity regardless [of who receives it], and the recipient could accept *zakāt* without causing hardship to [others in need], then he has a choice, and [in any] choice, the best course will vary. In general, though, accepting *zakāt* is the better way to break and humble the ego. And God knows best.

This concludes the *Mysteries of Charity*, which is book 5 in the Quarter of Worship, of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

Praise be to God as is His due. He is our sufficiency and the best of those on whom to depend.

And may blessings and salutations
be upon our Prophet
Muhammad and
on his
family.

Here follows the
Mysteries of Fasting
and its Important Elements.



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And may blessings and salutations
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on his
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Here follows the
Mysteries of Fasting
and its Important Elements.



The Mysteries of Fasting and Its Important Elements
Kitāb asrār al-ṣiyām wa-muhimmātihā

Book 6 of the
Revival of the Religious Sciences

Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ

O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous.

Sūrat al-Baqara, 2:183

Translator's Introduction

IN its earliest meaning, the word *ṣiyām* (fasting) included the idea of stopping or refraining from some physical movement. In the Qurʾān, the word is mentioned in relation to Mary, with the meaning, “to refrain from speaking.” After giving birth to Jesus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, she is told by the angel, *And if you see from among humanity anyone, see any human being, say “Indeed, I have vowed to the Most Merciful abstention (ṣawm), so I will not speak today to any man”* [19:26].

In the sense of complete abstention from eating, drinking, and sexual relations, fasting was ordained for Muslims in the following verse: *The month of Ramaḍān [is that] in which was revealed the*

*Qur'ān, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So whoever sights [the new moon of] the month, let him fast it... [2:185]. This verse fixed the obligatory fast for Muslims to the month of Ramadān. The following is among the most famous ḥadīths concerning the fast: "God ﷻ says, 'All the practices of the child of Adam belong to him, but the fast belongs to Me and I reward it.'"*¹

¹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 7492, and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 165.

[Author's Introduction]

PRAISE be to God who bestowed upon His servants an immense blessing when He shielded them from the ruses and artifices of Satan and thwarted his hopes and designs. For He made fasting a citadel and a shelter for His friends, opened to them thereby the gates of heaven, and gave them the knowledge that Satan enters their hearts through hidden appetites, and by curbing those appetites, the soul at peace might subdue its adversary.

And may God's blessings be upon Muḥammad, he who will lead creation on the day of judgment and who smooths the path of the *sunna*, and upon his family and Companions, who were endowed with piercing vision and illuminated minds—may blessings and salutations in abundance be upon them all.

To proceed: If, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "Fasting is half of patience," and "Patience is half of faith," then this means that fasting is one-quarter of faith.

[Fasting] is also distinguished from the other pillars of Islam by its particular relationship to God most high, as His words conveyed by the Prophet ﷺ attest, "Every good deed is rewarded tenfold to seven hundredfold, except fasting. It is for Me and I reward it."¹

And as God most high says [in the Qur'ān], *the patient will be given their reward without account [39:10].* [This along with the saying

¹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1904; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1151.

of the Prophet ﷺ, "Fasting comprises one-half of patience" [shows] that its recompense is beyond estimation and reckoning.

The Prophet ﷺ informed us of how excellent [fasting] is when he said, "By Him who holds my soul in His hand, the foul breath from a fasting person's mouth is sweeter to God than the scent of musk. God ﷻ says 'He has given up his desires, his food, and his drink for My sake and I shall reward him for it.'"²

He also said ﷺ, "Heaven has a gate called Rayyān which none shall enter save those who fasted."³

In recompense for his fasting, the servant is also promised happiness when he meets God most high, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "For the one who fasts there is a twofold happiness: The happiness he has on breaking his fast and the happiness he shall have on meeting his Lord."⁴

And he also said ﷺ, "For everything there is a gate, and the gate of worship is fasting."⁵

And also, "The sleep of a fasting person is worship."⁶

Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "When the month of Ramaḍān arrives, the gates of heaven are opened, the gates of hell are closed, the devils are chained, and a caller calls out, 'O you who desire goodness, come forward! O you who desire evil, turn back!'"⁷

And commenting on the words of God most high, *Eat and drink in satisfaction for what you put forth in the days past* [69:24], al-Wakī said, "The days past are the days of fasting, for it was then that they gave up food and drink."

The Messenger of God ﷺ connected [the issue of] abstaining from this world with fasting; [both are among] the things he boasted of when he said, "Truly, God most high boasts to His angels about a worshipful youth, saying, 'O youth who has given

² This is part of the ḥadīth cited above.

³ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1796; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1052.

⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 7492; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1151.

⁵ Ibn al-Mubārak, *Zuhd*; Qudāṭī, *Muṣṣad al-shihāb*, 1032.

⁶ Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 5:83; al-Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Imān*, 3652.

⁷ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 682, in its entirety, and without the ending, "and a caller calls out..." in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1899; and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1079.

up his desires and sacrificed this time of vigor for My sake, you are for Me like one of My angels."⁸

Of the one who fasts, the Prophet ﷺ said "God ﷻ says, 'O My angels! Behold My servant! He has given up his desires and sensual delights, his food and drink, for My sake.'"⁹

Concerning the words of God, *and no soul knows what has been hidden for them of comfort for eyes as reward for what they used to do* [32:17], it has been said that *what they used to do* means their fasting, for God has said, *the patient will be given their reward without account* [39:10]. Thus, the reward of one who fasts is unimaginably and inestimably vast, as well it should be.

For while all worship is His, fasting [in particular] belongs to God and is honored by its relationship to Him, just as the entire earth belongs to God, the sacred house is honored. Fasting for God has two meanings.

The first [meaning]: Fasting is abstention; giving something up, by its very nature, is concealed, with no observable action. So while all the other acts of worship are visible and may be witnessed by people, none can see fasting except God ﷻ. It is an inner practice accomplished purely through patience.

The second [meaning]: Fasting is overpowering to God's foe. For Satan, may God curse him, works by means of the appetites, which are strengthened by eating and drinking. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily, Satan circulates in a human being with the circulation of his blood, so make this circulation hard for him by hunger."¹⁰ And he also said to 'Ā'ishā رضي الله عنها, "Keep knocking on the gate of heaven." She asked, "How?" and he replied, "By hunger."¹¹

The virtues of hunger will be discussed [in detail] under the section that deals with the evil of food and its remedy, in the Quarter of Perils.¹²

⁸ Ibn 'Adī, *al-Kāmil*, 3:357; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 4:139; and in Ibn al-Mubārak, *Zuhd*, 346, with similar wording.

⁹ Abū Talib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:73.

¹⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2038; and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2174.

¹¹ Abū Talib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:171, with the addition, "and thirst." Al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, 4:194.

¹² In *Overcoming the Two Desires*, book 23 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

Inasmuch as fasting, in particular, suppresses Satan, blocks his path, and makes his circulation within a human being hard, it merits a special place in relation to God عز وجل. To suppress God's foe is to give aid to God, glory be to Him, and it is by our giving Him aid that He aids us, even as He has said, *if you support God, He will support you and plant firmly your feet* [47:7]. The beginning is by way of the servant's efforts; the reward is by way of guidance from God عز وجل. For this reason God said, *And those who strive for Us, We will surely guide them to Our ways* [29:69] and also, *Indeed God will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves* [13:11]. Here, "change" [in respect to people] means that their desires and appetites become ever greater,¹³ which gives the devils a fertile place to graze. As long as this pasture remains lush, they will keep returning to it, and as long as they keep returning, the majesty of God, glory be to Him, will not be shown to the servant and he will be veiled from meeting his Lord.

¹³ Here the editors of the Dār al-Minhāj edition of the *Ihyā' ulūm al-dīn* read the phrase as *al-taghayyuru bi-kasri al-shahwāt* ("change is by breaking their desires"), which accords with a relatively modern interpretation of the verse quoted: *Indeed, God will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves* [13:11]. However, in most editions of the *Ihyā' ulūm al-dīn*, the phrase reads *al-taghayyuru bi-takthiri al-shahwāt* ("change is by increasing their desires"), which follows the explanation of the majority of traditional commentaries on verse 13:11, that is, that God does not alter the condition of a people by taking His blessings from them unless they alter their own condition by ceasing to be grateful for those blessings. This is self-evident from the rest of the verse, which says, *And when God intends for a people ill, there is no repelling it. And there is not for them besides Him any patron.* and also from a similar verse: *God will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves* [8:53]. In this context, as in 13:11 above, "change" in respect to God, means that He removes His blessings from a people, while change, in respect to people, means that they sink into vice and ingratitude. Al-Ghazālī, in fact, follows this same meaning elsewhere in the *Ihyā'*, as in this passage from book 32 on *Patience and Thankfulness* (188): "And according to a narration [from one of the pious], when God's benefactions to a servant become great, people's need for that person also increases, while anyone who takes those benefactions for granted risks losing them," and then he quotes verse 13:11 as evidence of how they can be lost (*Ihyā' ulūm al-dīn*, 7:418). The commentary on the *Ihyā'* makes it clear, here, "Verily, God does not change what is with a people," meaning the many blessings He has given them, "until they change what is in themselves" by increasing their desires and appetites by giving themselves everything they crave or take sensual delight in. Al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, 4:195.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Were it not for the devils that circle around the hearts of the children of Adam, they would gaze on the dominions of the heavens."¹⁴ Because of this, fasting is the gate of worship and a shield.

Given that its virtues are such, it is indispensable for us to elucidate its requisite conditions, both outward and inward, by mentioning its obligatory elements, its *sunna* elements, and its inward dispositions. We discuss all this in three chapters.



¹⁴ Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 2:353.

1

On the Outward Obligations and *Sunna* Elements [of Fasting], and What Is Required If the Fast Is Broken

THERE are six outward obligations of fasting.

[1]

The first [obligation] is to watch for the beginning of the month of *Ramādān*. This is marked by sighting the crescent of the new moon, and if it is cloudy, then *Shābān* is completed as thirty days. Here, by “sighting” we mean “knowledge”; this can be gained by accepting the word of a certified witness (*‘adil*),¹ whereas the sighting of the new moon of *Shawwāl* requires accepting the word of two witnesses, to insure that worship [is correct]. So if someone hears from one witness [that the crescent has been sighted], and he feels certain that what [the witness] says is true, and he has no doubts about his honesty, then that person must fast. And this holds true even if the judge (*qādī*) himself has not announced it. In such a case, each servant must follow what he believes to be correct concerning his worship.

¹ In the context of the *Qurʾān*, this refers to a trustworthy witness; but by al-Ghazālī’s time it had come to mean someone holding an official or semi-official position attached to the office of the *qādī* (the head magistrate in issues of religious law).

If the moon is sighted in one town and not in another, and between them is a distance of less than two days' journey, then both towns must fast. But if the distance between them is greater than two days' journey, then each of them should reach its own judgment, and the obligation to fast is not shared.

[2]

The second obligation is intention. Every night [of Ramaḍān] a person must formulate a clear, specific, and decisive intention to fast [the next day], and this intention must remain through the night. To formulate this intention once for the entire month is not sufficient and this is what we mean when we say "every night."

And if he were to express this intention on the day of fasting itself, it would not be permissible for the fast of Ramaḍān or for any [other] obligatory fast, and this is what we mean by "remain through the night." It is permissible, however, to express the intention for a voluntary fast [on the morning] of that day.

And if his intention was simply "to fast" but was not specific, or even "to fast an obligatory fast," it would not be permissible [for the fast of Ramaḍān], rather [he must] express the intention "to fast [tomorrow] the fast of Ramaḍān made obligatory by God عَزَّوَجَلَّ."

If he made the intention on a night of doubt² to fast the next day if it were Ramaḍān, this would also not be permissible because it is not decisive. But if his intention was based on what a witness said—even given the possibility that the witness might be mistaken or lying—then his resolve to fast is sound, both in this case and in the analogous case of doubt about the last night of Ramaḍān. None of this prevents his intention from having the quality of resolve and decisiveness and the same holds true for a situation in which someone must make the best determination he can [about the following day], as in the case of someone imprisoned in a dungeon. If he has made

every effort to determine the month, and is convinced that [the next day] is Ramaḍān, the fact that doubt about it may exist does not annul his formulation of intention.

However, if he himself is in doubt, and it is a night of doubt, then even if he expresses his intention to fast [the following day] in a verbally decisive manner, it serves no purpose, for the place of intention is the heart, and it is inconceivable for decisiveness and doubt to coexist. Similarly, if [his intention was made] in the middle of Ramaḍān and someone said, "I will fast tomorrow if it is Ramaḍān," this would not harm his intention in the least because it would be merely uttering some words, while in the seat of intention, doubt would be inconceivable because there is complete certainty that [the next day] is Ramaḍān.

If someone formulates the intention [to fast the following day] and then eats [while it is still night], that does not invalidate his expression of intention, and if a woman who was menstruating formulated the intention to fast [the following day], and her menstruation ended and she bathed before dawn, her fast would be valid.

[3]

The third obligation is that a person must abstain from allowing anything to enter his body, if this happens intentionally, while he remembers that he is fasting. This includes food, drink, tobacco, and an enema. The fast is not broken, however, by medicinal bloodletting, cupping, or by the use of antimony around the eyes. In addition, the introduction of a probe into the ear does not break the fast, nor does a catheter into the urethra unless a liquid dripping from it reaches the bladder.

Anything that enters his body unintentionally, such as dust from the road or a fly that is swallowed, does not break the fast, nor does water when someone is rinsing out his mouth [in the ablution or otherwise], unless he does this excessively, by taking water too far back into the mouth, for in that case the act is done with intent. This is what we mean [above] by the word "intentionally" (ʿamda).

² "A night of doubt" (*laylat al-shakk*) is the night of 29 Shaʿbān, when, until the new moon is sighted, there can be doubt about whether the next day is the first of Ramaḍān.

The words "while he remembers that he is fasting" mean that forgetting [that he is fasting and eating or drinking] does not break his fast. But if a person eats intentionally, either at the beginning or the end of the fasting day, and then it becomes absolutely clear to him that he ate during the fasting day, he must make up that day. On the other hand, if, after making an effort to ascertain the truth, he remains convinced that he did not eat during the period of fasting, then he is not required to make up the day. In general, a person should not eat close to the very beginning and end of the day unless he has first looked [carefully] and made an effort [to know whether it is time to eat].

[4]

The fourth obligation is to abstain from sexual relations. This is defined as the male organ entering [the vagina] far enough that the glans is covered. If the fasting person engages in intercourse [while] forgetting he or she was fasting, the fast is not broken, just as it is not broken if someone has intercourse at night or has a nocturnal emission and wakes up needing to perform the greater ablution. If a person is having sexual relations with his spouse and dawn breaks and they cease at that moment, their fast is valid, but if they continue, their fast is invalidated and they need to pay compensation (*kaffāra*).

[5]

The fifth obligation is to abstain from masturbation, [which is] defined as the intentional emission of semen, with or without sexual relations [with one's spouse]. This breaks the fast; but to kiss her or lie with her does not, as long as there is no emission, although it is disapproved of except for an elderly man or [for a younger man] in control of his desires. So there is no harm in kissing, but refraining from it is preferable. And if a man fears that from kissing [or

touching] he will have some emission and yet he does it, with the result that the seminal fluid that precedes [ejaculation] is emitted, then he has broken his fast by his failure to stop.

[6]

The sixth obligation is to abstain from [induced] vomiting. This breaks the fast unless the one fasting had no control over it. And if a person swallows the phlegm that has reached his throat or esophagus, this does not break his fast. It is allowed because of how widespread this problem is, but if it reaches his mouth and he swallows it, then he has broken his fast.

[If the Fast Broken]

If the fast is broken, there are four possible duties. These [duties] are to make up the day [of fasting], to pay compensation, to abstain for the rest of the day in order to appear like others who are fasting, or to make amends.

[1] Making Up the Day (*Qaḍā*)

Making up the day [of fasting] is a general obligation on every adult Muslim of sound mind who did not fast, with or without excuse. So, for example, [after her] menstruation, a woman makes up the days she missed and someone who renounced Islam [makes up the days after returning to the faith]. But for a disbeliever, a child, or someone who is not of sound mind, there is no obligation to make up missed days.

In making up these days, there is no stipulation that [these days] must be continuous or all at one time. Rather, they can be made up in whatever way a person wishes, separately or together.

[2] Paying Compensation (*Kaffāra*)

This is only an obligation on someone who broke the fast by having sexual relations, but not on someone who broke it through masturbation, eating, drinking, or having sexual contact with one's spouse short of intercourse.

The amends to be paid is the freeing of a slave. If that is too difficult for the person, then he should fast two months consecutively, and if he does not have the ability to do that, then he should give sixty poor people a measure (*mudd*)³ of grain or dates [for each day missed].

[3] Abstaining for the Rest of the Day

(*Imsāk baqīyat al-nahār*)

This is obligatory for anyone who broke the fast with willful disobedience or fell short in respecting it completely. It is not obligatory for a woman whose menstruation ended and who then made the greater ablution, or for a traveler who arrived at his destination after a two-day journey during which he did not fast.

It is also obligatory to refrain [from eating and drinking for the remainder of the day] on a day when there is doubt [about it being Ramaḍān] or if the crescent moon [of Shawwāl] has only been seen by one witness.

It is better to fast during a journey than to break the fast, unless the traveler does not have the strength. In respect to the traveler, he should not break his fast on the day of his departure if he had begun [fasting] but not yet set out by the beginning of the day. The same holds true on the day of [his] return, if he had started that day fasting [he should finish the fast].

³ A measure (*mudd*) originally meant the amount of grain that would generously fill two outstretched hands. It is calculated presently as just over half a kilogram.

[4] [Paying] Expiation (*Fidya*)

Expiation may be paid by a pregnant or nursing mother who did not fast for fear that it would harm her baby. This means to give one measure (*mudd*) of wheat to one poor person for each day missed and also, later, to make up that day. And as for an elderly, infirm person, if he cannot fast, he should give, in charity, one measure for each day missed.

The Six *Sunna* Elements of Fasting

These are (1) to delay the pre-dawn meal; (2) to hasten to break the fast at sunset with a date, or water, before offering the [sunset] prayer; (3) to refrain from using the toothstick after noon; (4) to be generous in giving during the month of Ramaḍān, based on what is discussed in [the *Mysteries of Zakāt*]; (5) to study the Qur'ān; (6) to retreat (*i'tikāf*) in the mosque, especially during the last ten days of the month, as was the practice of the Messenger of God ﷺ, according to the *hadīth*, "When the last ten days arrived, he would fold up his bed, tighten his waistcloth, and enjoin the same upon his family."⁴ This means he would be steady in worship during this period since the night of power occurs during [this time]; it was most likely during the odd-numbered nights, and probably on the twenty-first, third, fifth, or seventh.

For the retreat, it is preferable that the days be consecutive. If someone vows to make an uninterrupted retreat [of a certain number of days], that vow is broken if he interrupts those days by leaving the mosque for anything except what is absolutely essential, such as visiting a sick person, bearing witness in a legal case, attending a funeral, visiting a friend, or renewing his ablution. If he leaves to answer the call of nature, this does not break his retreat. He should then perform the ablution in his home, but not attend to any other business on the way. When the Prophet ﷺ was in retreat,

⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2024; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1174.

he did not leave except to answer the call of nature, and would not ask about a sick person except while passing by.⁵

The continuity of the retreat is broken by sexual relations, but not by kissing, and there is no harm, while in the mosque, to use scent, contract a marriage, eat, sleep, and wash the hands in a basin, since all those things may become necessary during a continuous retreat. Nor is the continuity of the retreat broken if some portion of the body is outside the mosque, for [a *ḥadīth* states] that the Prophet ﷺ used to put his head out [of the mosque], where ‘Ā’ishā رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا could comb his hair from her [adjacent] room.⁶

Whenever someone leaves the retreat to answer the call of nature, he needs to renew his intention upon returning, unless he had previously made the intention to complete a retreat of ten days. Even then, it is better to renew the intention.



⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2029; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 297.

⁶ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 296; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 297. Small chambers (*hujurāt*) for the Prophet's wives were built into the east wall of the mosque and these opened directly onto it, so the Prophet ﷺ could have been sitting in the mosque while ‘Ā’ishā رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا combed his hair from her room. These chambers are referred to in Sūrat al-Hujurāt (49:4); the Prophet ﷺ was buried in ‘Ā’ishā's chamber. See Lings, *Muhammad*, 132.

2

On the Mysteries of Fasting and Its Inner Conditions

KNOW that there are three levels of fasting: the fasting of the common faithful [people], the fasting of the elect, and the fasting of the elect of the elect.

The fasting of the common faithful [people] consists in keeping the stomach and private parts from satisfying their desires, as has been detailed above.

The fasting of the elect consists in keeping the hearing, sight, tongue, hands, feet, and all other members of the body free from sin.

The fasting of the elect of the elect [involves] the heart; [it consists of] fasting from worldly concerns and mundane thoughts and completely refraining from [focusing on] anything other than God عزَّ وجلَّ. This fast is broken by thinking about anything other than God عزَّ وجلَّ and the last day, [that is, by] thinking about anything in this world except what supports the *dīn*, and what is provision for the hereafter and not this world. In fact, the people of the heart say, “Anyone whose concern during the day turns into pondering over what he will break his fast with [at sunset] is committing a sin,” for this shows how little trust he has in God's generosity (*fadl*), and how little certainty he has that his provision is guaranteed.¹

This is the level of fasting of the prophets, the veracious, and those who are near God. We will not dwell on trying to describe this, other than to say that its deepest meaning is to focus our entire

¹ Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:114.

aspiration on God ﷻ, to turn away from what is other than God, glory be to Him, and to be completely enveloped by the meaning of His words Say, "God [revealed it]." Then leave them in their [empty] discourse, amusing themselves [6:91].

As for the fasting of elect, which is the fasting of the righteous (ṣāliḥīn), this consists in keeping the members of the body away from sin and [it] is accomplished through six practices.

[1]

The first [practice] is to lower the gaze and refrain from letting one's vision extend to anything blameworthy or disapproved of, or [to extend] to anything that preoccupies and distracts the heart from the remembrance of God ﷻ. As the Prophet ﷺ said, "The gaze is one of the poisoned arrows of Iblīs [Satan], may God curse him. Anyone who refrains from gazing [at something] out of the fear of God, God ﷻ will give [them] faith whose sweetness [that person will] find in his heart."²

And Jābir conveyed from Anas that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Five things will break the fast of a fasting person: lying, backbiting, slander, making a false oath, and gazing at something with lust."³

[2]

The second [practice] is to guard the tongue from babbling, lying, backbiting, slander, obscenity, pettiness, disputation, and ostentation. Instead, it should be silent or occupied with the invocation of God, glory be to Him, and the recitation of the Qur'an. Such is the tongue's fasting.

² Al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, 10:173; al-Hakīm al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, 4:313; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 6:101.

³ Al-Daylami, *Musnad al-firdaws*, 4:245; Ibn Abi Shayba, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, 8975, narrates a ḥadīth whose meaning is similar.

According to Bishr b. al-Hārith, Sufyān [al-Thawri] said, "Backbiting annuls the fast."

And Layth related that Mujāhid said, "Two kinds of behavior ruin the fast: backbiting and lying."⁴ [Concerning the same subject], the Prophet ﷺ said "Fasting is a shield, so if one of you is fasting, let him refrain from obscenities and foolishness, and should he encounter someone who wishes to fight with him or be verbally abusive, let him say, only, 'I am fasting!'"⁵

It is related in a tradition that during the lifetime of the Messenger of God ﷺ there were two women who were fasting and felt such hunger and thirst by the end of the day that they were about to die. So they sent a message to the Messenger of God ﷺ, asking his permission to break the fast. In response, he sent them a large bowl and said, "Tell them to vomit into this what they have eaten." To the amazement of the onlookers, one of them vomited fresh blood and flesh that filled half the bowl and the other did the same until it was completely filled. The Prophet ﷺ then said, "These two fasted from what God makes lawful for them, but broke their fast on what God most high forbade them: They sat down together to backbite people, and this is some of their flesh which they ate."⁶

[3]

The third [practice] is to keep the ears from listening to anything reprehensible, for anything that is forbidden to say is forbidden to hear. Thus God ﷻ made listening to lies equal to devouring illicit gains with His words, [They are] avid listeners to falsehood, devourers of [what is] unlawful [5:42].

And also Why do the rabbis and religious scholars not forbid them from saying what is sinful and devouring what is unlawful? [5:63]. To be silent in the presence of backbiting is also forbidden, for as

⁴ Ibn Abi Shayba, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, 8980; Abū Ṭalib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:114.

⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1894; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1150.

⁶ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 5:431.

He says elsewhere ...*Indeed, you would then be like them* [4:140].⁷ Thus the Prophet ﷺ said, "The backbiter and the one who listens to him are partners in sin."⁸

[4]

The fourth [practice] is to guard the rest of the members of the body—the hands and the feet—from sin and from things that are disapproved of and to keep the stomach from what is questionable at the moment of breaking the fast. It is meaningless to fast by refraining from what is lawful, only to break the fast with what is forbidden. This is like building a castle and destroying a town. Lawful food harms by quantity, not by content, and fasting is meant to reduce that quantity. Someone who avoids a large dose of medicine because it might do him harm but then takes a small dose of poison in its place, is truly a fool. While forbidden food is a poison that is deadly to [one's] *dīn*, lawful food is a remedy that works in small doses but harms in large ones. So the purpose of fasting is to reduce its quantity.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "How many of those who fast gain nothing from their fasts except hunger and thirst";⁹ this was said to refer to those who break their fasts with what is forbidden, or who refrain from lawful food but break their fast with people's flesh by backbiting, which is forbidden. It was also said that it refers to anyone who does not guard the members of his body from sins.

⁷ The full verse is, *And it has already come down to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of God [recited], they are denied [by them] and ridiculed; so do not sit with them until they enter into another conversation. Indeed, you would then be like them. Indeed God will gather the hypocrites and disbelievers in hell all together.*

⁸ Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 4:93, and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdad*, 8:221.

⁹ Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 2:373; and with similar wording in Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1690.

[5]

The fifth [practice] is to not eat so much, at the time of breaking the fast—even though the food is lawful—that his stomach becomes completely full, for no vessel angers God ﷻ more than a stomach that is filled, even with lawful food.¹⁰

How can fasting serve to overcome God's foe and subdue a person's appetites if, when breaking the fast, a person makes up whatever he missed in the afternoon or perhaps even adds to it a variety of foods? It has become a custom to store up all sorts of foods for Ramaḍān, such that, in that month, people eat what they do not eat in other months. Yet it is clear that the goal of fasting is to become empty and to break the desires in order to strengthen piety in the soul. If the stomach is deprived of food all day until the evening, such that its appetite is stimulated and its cravings grow stronger, and then it is fed all manner of delicacies to repletion, its sensual pleasure is only increased and this leads to passions that were not there before.

The spirit and mystery of fasting [involves] weakening the physical energy that Satan uses to turn people toward evil, and this weakening cannot be achieved except by reducing [the intake of food]. This means that someone should eat whatever he normally eats at night when not fasting. If he combines what he eats at noon with what he eats at night, he will derive no benefit from his fast.

Indeed, among the manners related to fasting [is] not to sleep too much during the day—so that he can feel hunger and thirst, experience physical weakness, and thereby cleanse his heart. At night some amount of that weakening should remain with him, so that night worship (*tahajjud*) and litanies are easier for him. In this way maybe even Satan will cease to hover round his heart and he will behold the dominions of the heavens.

The "night of power" refers to the night during which some part of these heavenly dominions were revealed, and this is what is meant by the words of God most high, *Indeed, We sent the Qur'an*

¹⁰ This paraphrases a ḥadīth in al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2380, and Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 3349: "The worst vessel the child of Adam can fill is his stomach."

down during the night of power [97:1], but he who places a feedbag between his heart and his breast is veiled, and simply emptying the stomach is not enough to lift that veil, as long as he does not also cease to aspire after anything but God ﷻ. This, in fact, is the whole goal, but it begins with reducing the intake of food. More about this will be elucidated in the book on food," if God ﷻ so wills.

[6]

The sixth [practice]: On breaking the fast, the heart of the one who fasted should remain in suspense between fear and hope, because he does not know whether his fast has been accepted and he has been brought nearer to God, or rejected, and he has incurred God's anger.

This is how we should be [that is, in suspense] upon completing any devotional practice. Thus, it is narrated concerning Hasan al-Baṣrī that [on the day of 'Īd al-Fiṭr] he passed by some people who were laughing and [he] said to them,

God ﷻ has made the month of Ramaḍān to be a race course for His creatures, [so] that they might vie with one another during it. Some people take the lead and win the race, others lag behind and lose; but it is utterly amazing to find those who laugh and play on a day when those who took the lead won and those who lagged behind lost. By God, if the veil were lifted, the [one who] does good would be totally absorbed by his good acts, and the [one who] does evil would be totally absorbed by his evil [acts].

This means that the joy of the one [whose worship was] accepted should completely distance him from idle play, and the loss of the one [whose worship was] rejected should close the doorway of laughter in his face.

It was once said to Ahnaf b. Qays, "You are a very elderly man. Fasting will weaken you!" To which he replied, "I see it as preparation

for a long journey and to endure in God's worship, glory be to Him, is easier than to endure His chastisement."¹²

These, then, are the inner meanings of fasting.

And if you were to ask, "How then do the jurists (*fuqahā'*) consider valid the fast of someone who pays no attention to these inner meanings, but only refrains from the desires of his stomach and private parts? What does that mean?"

Know that jurists (*fuqahā'*) of the outward base the conditions [for the validity of an act of worship] on proofs that are much weaker than the ones we have related concerning the inward conditions, especially in respect to such vices as backbiting. The only responsibility of those jurists (*fuqahā'*) is to make things easy for the common people who live in heedlessness and are occupied by the world.

For the scholars of the hereafter (*'ulamā' al-ākhirā*), what is meant by validity is acceptance, and by acceptance, [they mean] reaching the goal. They understand that the goal of fasting is for a human being to realize in his character some aspect of the character of God ﷻ, which, in this case, is His attribute of everlasting independence (*ṣamadiyya*) and in doing so [i.e., realizing this character], to imitate, as much as possible, the angels who are beyond desires and appetites. The human state is above that of animals because, by the light of the intellect a human being can subdue his appetites; but [his state] is below that of angels to the extent that appetites still control him and combatting them is a trial. Every time he becomes engrossed in his appetites, he descends to 'the lowest of the low,'¹³ to the level of animals, and every time he overcomes those desires, he is raised to the highest of the high, to the level of angels. The angels are those who are near to God ﷻ and so anyone who seeks to be like them in their nature is also brought near to God ﷻ. Indeed, to be like someone who is near to God is itself a way of being near to God. Here we speak, of course, not of physical nearness but of character.

If this, then, is the mystery of fasting according to the people endowed with understanding (*arbāb al-albāb*) and the people of the

¹² The first part of this saying is found in Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, 9-95.

¹³ Here he is paraphrasing the verse, We have certainly created human beings in the best of stature; then We return him to the lowest of the low [95:4-5].

¹¹ *The Proprieties of Eating*, book 11 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

heart, then what is the benefit of delaying one meal and combining two meals in the evening, while indulging other desires all day long?

And if there were some benefit, then what is the meaning the Prophet's words صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, "How many of those who fast gain nothing from their fasts except hunger and thirst."¹⁴

Thus Abū l-Dardā' said, "How excellent is the sleep of the wise and how excellent [are they,] even their eating, and how they put the fasting and vigils of the foolish to shame! An atom's weight of worship by those who have inner certainty is better and more profitable than a mountain of worship by those estranged from God."

This is also what a certain scholar meant when he said, "How many a person who is fasting is not [actually] fasting (*kam min sā'imīn muftirun*) and how many a person who is eating is [actually] fasting." The one who is fasting while eating is a person who keeps the members of his body from sins as he eats and drinks, while the one who is breaking his fast while fasting is a person who hungers and thirsts, but lets the members of his body do what they will.

Those who understand the meaning of fasting and its mystery know that someone who abstains from food, drink, and sexual relations but breaks his fast with sins is like someone who makes the ablution by wiping with his hands the parts of the body which must be washed three times, but fails to use water. In doing so, he follows the outward form in respect to the number of times, but ignores the most important part, which is washing, and so because of his ignorance, his prayer is not accepted. On the other hand, someone who eats his food but fasts by keeping the members of his body away from what is disapproved is like someone who makes the ablution by washing the parts of the body once each. His prayer is accepted, God willing, because he fulfills the most important part of the ablution even while not accomplishing what is meritorious. And the one who combines both is comparable to someone who washes each part of the body three times. To join the essential with the meritorious is to be complete.¹⁵

The Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ once said, "Truly, fasting is a trust, so let each of you guard his trust."¹⁶

And when he recited the words of God عَزَّ وَجَلَّ *Indeed God commands you to render trusts to whom they are due* [4:58], he placed his hands on his ears and eyes and said, "Hearing is a trust. Sight is a trust."¹⁷ If these were not part of the trust of fasting, why would he صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ have said, "Then say, 'Verily, I am fasting,'"¹⁸ which is to say, "I have been given my tongue as a trust to watch over, so why would I give it free rein to answer [your insults in kind]?"

Thus, it is clear that every act of worship has an outward and inward aspect, a husk and a kernel, and even the husks have various degrees, and each degree has levels. So now the choice is yours to make. Will you be satisfied with the husk rather than the kernel, or will you join the ranks of those endowed with understanding?



16 "Fasting is a trust" is part of a longer *ḥadīth* that can be found in al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, 10:219 and Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilya*, 4:201.

17 Ibn Abi l-Dunya, *Makārim al-akhlāq*, 275.

18 This is part of the *ḥadīth* quoted above in al-Bukhārī, *Saḥīh*, 1894; Muslim, *Saḥīh*, 1150.

14 Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 2:373, and with similar wording in Ibn Maja, *Sunan*, 1690.

15 This comparison is mentioned by Abū Ṭālib al-Makki, *Qut al-qulūb*, 1:75.

On Voluntary Fasting and Its Order in Supererogatory Worship

KNOW that supererogatory fasting is especially recommended on certain days of particular merit. Some of these days occur yearly, some monthly, and some weekly.

Those that occur yearly, apart from Ramaḍān [are as follows].

These are the day of 'Arafa, the day of 'Āshūra, the first ten days of Dhū l-Hijja, and the first day of Muḥarram. Fasting on any of the days of the sacred months¹ is recommended, for they are times of special merit. The Messenger of God ﷺ also used to fast so much in the month of Sha'bān that one would have thought it was Ramaḍān, and it is related in a tradition, "The most excellent fasting apart from Ramaḍān is during God's month, Muḥarram."²

He also said ﷺ, "To fast one day of one of the sacred months is better than fasting thirty days during any other month, and to fast one day in Ramaḍān is better than fasting thirty days during one of the [other] sacred months."³

¹ These are Muḥarram, Rajab, Dhū l-Qa'da, and Dhū l-Hijja.

² Muslim, *Sahih*, 1163.

³ Al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-saghir*, 2:71.

And in another *ḥadith* it was stated, "For anyone who fasts three days of a sacred month—Thursday, Friday, and Saturday—God will record for each [of those days] the worship of nine hundred years."⁴

A report states, "When it is the middle of Sha'bān, there is no fasting until Ramaḍān."⁵ Based on this, it is preferable to stop fasting some days before Ramaḍān, but it is also permissible to join the fasting of Sha'bān with the fasting of Ramaḍān, since the Messenger of God ﷺ did this once,⁶ [though] many more times [he left a period of not fasting between them].⁷

It is also not permissible to precede Ramaḍān with two or three days of fasting unless [fasting on those days] is a regular personal practice. Some of the Companions also disapproved of fasting all of Rajab, so as not to put it on the same level as Ramaḍān.⁸

The meritorious months are Dhū l-Hijja, Muḥarram, Rajab, and Sha'bān, while the sacred months are Dhū l-Qa'da, Dhū l-Hijja, Muḥarram, and Rajab. One of these months, Rajab, is isolated, while the other three are consecutive, with the most excellent of these being Dhū l-Hijja, since it is the month of the pilgrimage, the "known days," and the "numbered days."⁹ Of the sacred months, Dhū l-Qa'da is the most excellent, since it is also one of the months of the pilgrimage; Shawwāl is also one of the months of the pilgrimage, though it is not one of the sacred months.¹⁰ Muḥarram and Rajab, however, are not among the months of pilgrimage.

⁴ Abū Nu'aym, *Tārīkh Iṣbahān*, 1:33; al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-awsat*, 1810; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 19:116, with variations in the wording concerning the number of years of worship.

⁵ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 2337; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 736; al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 2923; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1651.

⁶ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 2336; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 736; al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 2353; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1648.

⁷ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 2325.

⁸ Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1743.

⁹ The "known days" (*al-ayyām al-ma'lūmāt*), mentioned in 22:28, are the first ten days of the month of Dhū l-Hijja. The "numbered days" (*al-ayyām al-ma'dūdāt*) are also called "the days of facing east" (*al-ayyām al-tashriq*), and these are the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth of Dhū l-Hijja.

¹⁰ Historically, pilgrims set out for Mecca as early as Shawwāl, two months before the actual rites begin, and Dhū l-Qa'da, which is one month before.

In another tradition it is stated, "There are no days for devotional practice more beloved to God ﷺ than the ten days of Dhū l-Hijja. Fasting during one of them is equal to fasting the entire year, and standing for prayer during one of their nights is equal to standing for prayer on the night of power." And they asked, "Not even fighting for the sake of God most high [is better]?" And he answered, "Not even fighting for the sake of God ﷺ, unless one's mount was killed and blood was spilled."¹¹

As for the days of each month that are meritorious for fasting, these include the beginning of the month, the middle, and the end. The middle days are the days of whiteness,¹² these being the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth.

As for the days each week, these are Monday, Thursday, and Friday.¹³ All of these are meritorious times when fasting and abundant good works are recommended because of the multiple rewards that come from the blessedness of these times.

In respect to the continuous fast (*sawm al-dahr*), this is a practice which includes all [that we have mentioned] and more. Concerning it, travelers on the spiritual path have varying views. Some of them disapprove of it and there are narrations which support their view.¹⁴ The correct view is that it is disapproved of for two reasons.

One of these is that if someone fasts every day, it means not breaking the fast on the two feast days (*īdayn*), or on the days of *tashriq*.¹⁵ The other [i.e., second reason] is that this practice contradicts the *sunna* concerning breaking the fast and [it] makes fasting a stone for the soul to bear, even while God, glory be to Him, loves to give us license just as much as He loves to give us challenges.¹⁶

11 Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 758; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 1728, but without the phrase beginning "Not even fighting..."

12 When the moon is full and thus makes the nights white.

13 Friday, if the day before or after is also fasted.

14 As in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1977; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1159: "Anyone [who] always fasts is not fasting."

15 Al-Tashriq, literally, "facing the East." These are the three days following the tenth of Dhū l-Hijja (which is the day of the sacrifice), during which strips of meat to be preserved are hung in such a way as to face the rising sun and thus get the best portion sunlight in which to dry.

16 This echoes a *ḥadīth* in Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 2:108.

If, however, in the absence of that,¹⁷ someone sees in continuous fasting something good for his soul, then let him do it, for it was practiced by a number of the Companions and also the Followers ﷺ.

According to a tradition related by Abū Mūsā l-Ash'arī, the Prophet ﷺ said, "For the one who fasts for life, hell will become narrow and he will live to the age of ninety."¹⁸ "Become narrow" means that there will be no place for him in hell.

Short of fasting continuously, there is another degree, which is to fast every other day. This, in fact, is harder on the ego and a more powerful [way of] subduing it. Concerning its excellence, many narrations have been passed down, for in following this practice, the servant is between a day of fasting and a day of thanks. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ said,

I was offered the keys to the treasures of this world and riches of the earth and I refused them and said, "Let me instead be hungry one day and replete the next, that I might praise You, O Lord, when I am replete and turn to You in need when I hunger."¹⁹

And he also said ﷺ, "The best fast is the fast of my brother Dāwūd: He would fast one day and eat the next."²⁰

Related to this are the degrees of fasting that the Prophet ﷺ gave to 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ when the latter said to him, "I am strong enough to do more..." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Then fast one day and break your fast the next," to which ['Abdallāh b. 'Umar] replied, "I would really like something with more merit than that." And he ﷺ said, "There is nothing with more merit than that."²¹

17 The commentary explains "if someone does not fear harming himself or contravening the right of another human being." Al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf*, 4:261.

18 Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3584.

19 Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2347, with similar wording.

20 Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 770, with this wording; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1976; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1159, with similar wording.

21 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1976; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1159. In these versions of the *ḥadīth*, the Prophet ﷺ recommended that he fast only three days each month, saying "Your body has a right upon you, your eye has a right upon you, and your wife

It is also related that the Prophet ﷺ never fasted for a whole month apart from Ramaḍān.

For anyone who cannot manage fasting half the time, there is no harm in fasting one-third of the time, which means fasting one day and not fasting for the next two [days]. And if he fasts three days at the beginning of the month, three in the middle, and three at the end, that is [also] one-third and will also occur at the most meritorious times. Even if he fasts [only] Mondays and Thursdays, that is nearly one-third.

Even when these meritorious times for supererogatory fasting are clear, observing them is incomplete unless we understand the meaning of fasting and its purpose, which is to purify our hearts and focus all our aspirations on God عز وجل.

So the jurist (*faqih*) who understands the complexities of the inward self looks at its states. One spiritual state may call for fasting every day, another may call for eating every day, and yet another may call for a mixture of both. If someone understands the meaning of fasting and its role in following the path of the hereafter by way of watching over the heart, then what is best for the heart is never hidden. But this does not necessarily mean always following the same routine. It was related concerning the Prophet ﷺ,

He would fast until it was said "He never breaks his fast!" and he would leave off fasting until it was said, "He never fasts!" He would sleep the night until it was said, "He never stands in prayer," and he would stand in prayer until it was said, "He never sleeps."

He did this according to what was revealed to him through the light of prophecy, and regarding how best to fulfill what is due during the times [of one's life].

Some of the learned disapproved of leaving more than four days between each [supererogatory] fast—this is equal to the day of the feast and the three days of *tashrīq*—[they] say that [a longer

has a right upon you." Abdallah b. 'Umar, however, continued to ask for a more rigorous practice and it is said that he followed it for most or all of his life, but later said, "If only I had taken that license!"

period than that] hardens the heart, engenders bad habits, and open the gates of passions.

And upon my life, this is indeed the case for most people, especially those who eat twice in a day and night.

This is all that we wished to mention concerning the arrangement of voluntary fasting, and God knows best what is correct.

Thus ends the book on the *Mysteries of Fasting and Its Important Elements*, this being book 6 of the Quarter of Worship from the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*, may God most high be praised and thanked, and may His blessings be upon the best of creation, our master Muḥammad, and upon his family pure and sweet, and all his Companions.

Here follows the book on the *Mysteries of the Pilgrimage and Its Important Elements*.



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About the Translator

Michael Abdurrahman Fitzgerald

Originally from California, Abdurrahman Fitzgerald and his wife migrated to Morocco in the late 1970s. Since that time, he has been involved in education and the study of Arabic, Islam, and Sufism. He co-translated *Ibn al-Qayyim on the Invocation of God* (Islamic Text Society, 2000), edited and annotated Denys Johnson-Davies's translation of al-Ghazali's *Kitāb ādab al-akl* (Islamic Texts Society, 2000), and assisted in Kenneth Honerkamp's edition of *al-Rasā'il al-kubrā* by Ibn 'Abbād (Dār al-Machreq, 2005). He translated al-Ghazali's *The Mysteries of the Prayer*, book 4 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (Fons Vitae, 2018) and *The Mysteries of the Pilgrimage*, book 7 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (Fons Vitae, 2019). Other works he has translated with Fouad Aresmouk include *The Immense Ocean*, a portion of Ibn 'Ajība's Qur'ānic commentary; *The Book of Ascension*, Ibn 'Ajība's spiritual glossary; a portion of the work, *Two Sufi Commentaries*; and *The Mysteries of Purification*, book 3 of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*, all published by Fons Vitae. Abdurrahman holds degrees from the University of California and Shenandoah University, Virginia, and is the director of the Center for Language and Culture, Marrakesh.



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In the *Mysteries of Charity and Its Important Elements* (*Kitāb asrār al-zakāt wa-muhimātiha*; book 5) and the *Mysteries of Fasting and Its Important Elements* (*Kitāb asrār al-ṣiyyām wa-muhimātiha*; book 6) of the forty books of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Ihyā' ulūm al-dīn*), Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī explains the inner and outer meanings of charity and fasting, two pillars of worship for Muslims. These are two of the five books that deal with the inner dimensions of Islamic worship; books 3, 4, and 7 address purification, prayer, and pilgrimage, respectively.

In book 5 al-Ghazālī begins with a discussion of the various kinds of *zakāt* and the conditions under which they become obligatory. He explains the manners related to *zakāt* and its inward and outward conditions. He then discusses the recipients of *zakāt*, who qualifies for it and in what circumstances, and the manners related to receiving it. Finally, al-Ghazālī explains charity and its virtues.

In book 6 al-Ghazālī begins with the outward obligations and *summa* elements of fasting, and what is required if the fast is broken. He explains the mystery of fasting and its inner conditions. Finally, he discusses the voluntary fasts and their order in supererogatory worship.

This readable yet comprehensive work covers an array of issues from the essential outward aspects of giving charity, to the inward aspects of the state of the heart during the fast and how to humble oneself completely. As a practical yet profound book, it is an indispensable guide for Muslims who seek a deeper comprehension of these two fundamental practices for Muslims, and for all those interested in understanding the meaning and role of charity and fasting in Islam.

Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) was a leading scholar, jurist, and theologian of the golden age of Islam, and he remains its truest advocate in modern times. As a teacher of both inward and outward faith, he recorded these practical teachings in his forty-book compendium of Islamic knowledge.